

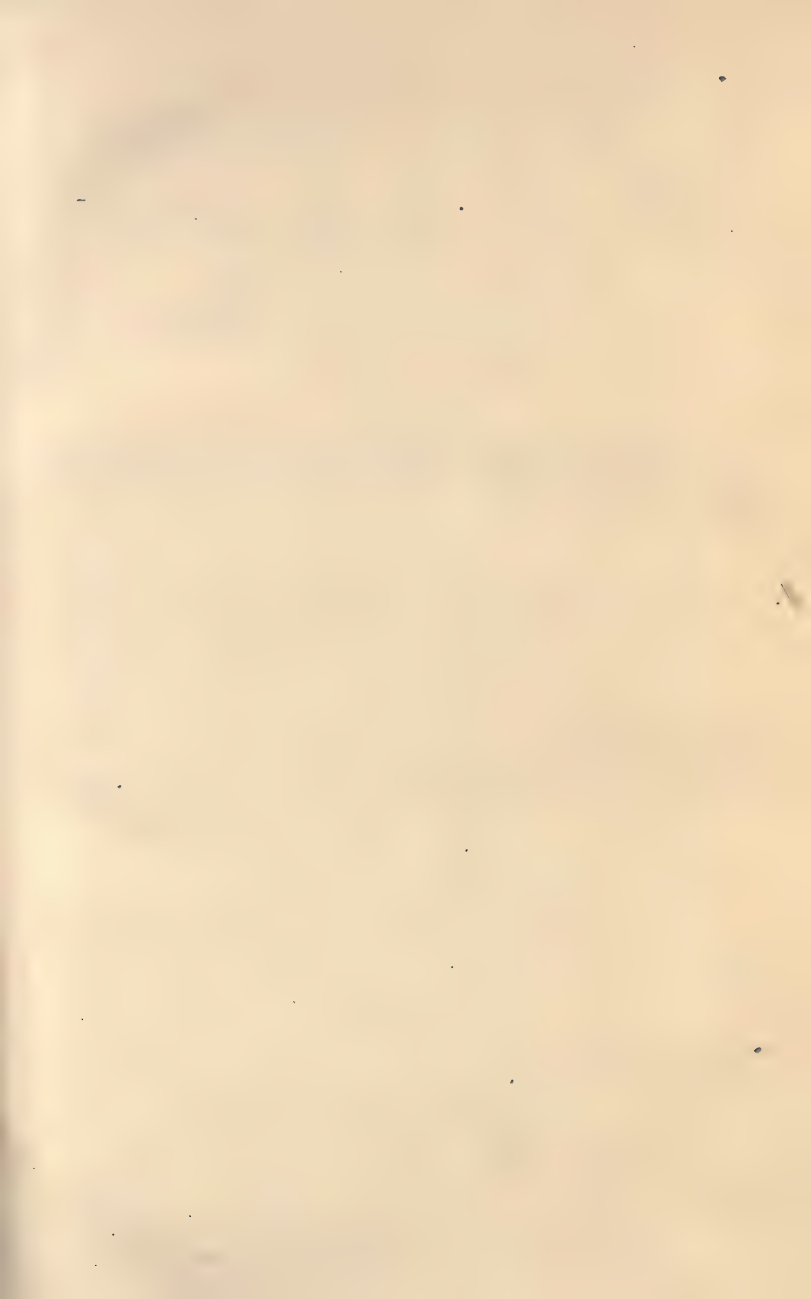
Miss Frankie Farna,

Recognition Day,

Chautauqua.

July 6th 1892.





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THE STORY OF DON MIFF,

AS TOLD BY HIS FRIEND

JOHN BOUCHE WHACKER.

A SYMPHONY OF LIFE.

EDITED BY

VIRGINIUS DABNEY.

Τέκνον, τί κλαίεις ; τί δέ σε φρένας ἵκετο πένθος ;
Ἐξαύδα, μὴ κεῖθε νόφ, ἵνα εἶδομεν ἅμφω.

ILIAD, i. 362-63.

Child, why dost thou weep ? What grief hath come upon thy spirit ?
Speak—conceal it not—so that we both may know.

SEVENTH EDITION.

PHILADELPHIA:

J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY.

1890.

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PREFACE.

It is pretty well understood, I presume, that while books are written for the entertainment of the public, a preface has fulfilled its mission if it prove a solace to the author and an edification to the proof-reader thereof. Yet (however it may be with an author) an editor must, it seems, write one.

Most mysteriously, then, and I knew not whence or from whom, the manuscript of this work found itself in my study, some time since, accompanied by the request that I should stand sponsor for it.

I shall do nothing of the kind. True, the grammar of it will pass muster, I think; and its morals are above reproach; but the way our author has of sailing into everything and everybody quite takes my breath away. Lawyers, military men, professors and students, parsons, agnostics, statesmen, billiard-players, novelists, poetesses, saints and sinners—he girds at them all. I should not have a friend left in the world were it to go abroad that this Mr. J. B. Whacker's opinions were also mine. If but to enter this disclaimer, therefore, I must needs write a preface.

This author of ours, then, is, as you shall find, an actor in the scenes he describes, and is quite welcome to any sentiments he may see fit to put into his own mouth. He entertains, I am free to admit, an unusual number of opinions; more than one man's share, perhaps; but not one of them is either reader or editor called upon to adopt.

It seems fair, too, to warn the eccentric person who shall read this preface, against putting too much faith in the account Mr. Whacker gives of himself. The as-

tounding pedigree to which he lays claim in Chapter I. may be satire, for aught I know; but when he poses as a lawyer, a bachelor, and a ton of a man, weighing (though he does not give the exact figures) not much less than three hundred pounds, he is counting too much on the simplicity of his editor. For the internal evidence of the work itself makes it clear that he is a physician, ever so much married, and nestling amid a very grove of olive branches. He assures us, too, for example (he is never tired of assuring us of something), that he is entirely ignorant of music; yet divides his work not into books (as a Christian should), but into *movements*; indicating (presumably) the spirit and predominant feeling of each by the opening page of the orchestral score of one of the four numbers of a famous symphony!

One more word and I am done.

Our author has not seen fit to make any reply to the incessant, and still unceasing onslaughts, from pen and pencil alike, to which the South has submitted, and still submits, twenty-one years after Appomattox, with a silence that has been as grand as it is unparalleled.

His only revenge has been to paint his people and the lives they led.

But it seems to me best to say, once for all, that whenever the necessities of the narrative compel him to show his sympathies on one side or the other (as happens two or three times in the course of the story), they will be found to be with those people among whom he was born, by whose side he fought, and with whom he has suffered. And I feel sure that no man who knows me, in the South, and equally sure that no man who knows me, in the North, would deem me capable of printing this book, had it been otherwise.

V. DABNEY,

108 WEST FORTY-NINTH STREET,
NEW YORK.

April, 1886.

THE STORY OF DON MIFF.

CHAPTER I.

1.

LONG, long years before these pages shall meet thine almond eye, my Ah Yung Whack, the hand which penned them for thy delectation will have crumbled into dust. Three hundred years and more, let us say; for thou art (or shalt in due time be) my great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grand-son.

2.

True, I am not yet married; but I intend to be. Nor is there any need of hurry; seeing what a singularly distant and belated relative thou art.

3.

If then, dear, intended Offspring, you will be so anachronistic as to sit beside your proposed ancestor, and so civil as to lend him your ear, he will give you one or two reasons for addressing you, rather than the general public of his own day.

4.

First, then, humanity.

This poor public of his (that is my) day has been, these many years, so pelted with books, that I cannot bring myself to join the mob of authors, and let fly another.

The very leaves in Vallambrosa, flying before the blasts of autumn, cannot compare with them in numbers, as they go whizzing from innumerable presses.

Why, I read, the other day, a statement (by a stater) that if you were to set up, in rows, all the books that are annually published in Christendom (beg pardon, my boy, Evolutiondom), and then fell to sawing out shelves for them in the pine forests of North Carolina, the North Carolinians would soon find themselves inhabitants of a prairie.

Or, to put it in another shape:

The earth, adds Mr. Statisticker, the earth, we will allow, for illustration's sake, to be twenty-five thousand miles around. Now, says he, suppose all these books to be pulled to pieces [shame!] and their leaves pinned together, end to end, they would stretch ever so (for I cannot, at the moment, lay my hands on his little statistic) they would stretch ever so far.

Shall I add to the already unbearable burdens of my generation? Humanity forbid!

5.

And look at this:

In any given country a certain number of undergarments will be worn out, year by year, producing a certain crop of rags. These rags can be converted into so much, and no more, paper. Hence, as any thinking man would have reasoned (until the advent of a recent invention), the advancing flood of literature was practically held in check. So many exhausted shirts, so many books,—so many exhausted washerwomen, so many (and no more) authors. There was a limit.

That day is gone. Wood-pulp and cheap editions have opened the flood-gates of genius upon the world; and the days of our noble forests are numbered; for one tree is sawn into shelves to hold another ground into paper. And already, through the denudation of the land, the Mississippi grows uncontrollable, taxing even the wisdom of Congress. And many a lesser stream, in which once the salmon sported, or which turned a mill, or meandered, at least, past orchard or corn land, a steady source of fruitful moisture, is now a fierce tor-

rent in spring, in autumn a string of stagnant pools. What the builder began, the builder (for that, I hear, is the Greek for him) and the novelist will end.

Shall I too print a book? Patriotism forbid!

6.

The trouble is, however, that I feel that I have something to say, and a man that has something to say, and is not allowed to say it, is (like a woman or a boiler) in danger. Nor has my native land, when I come to think of it, the right to exact of me that I burst, to save a beggarly sapling or so from pulpification.

7.

Yes, I have something to say, and I'll out with it. For I have hit upon a plan whereby I can print my book with the merest infinitesimal damage to the Mississippi and other patriotic streams. It is this. I shall have but one copy printed. This, in a strong box, hermetically sealed, shall be addressed to you. I shall hand it to my eldest son, and he to his; and so it will travel down the stream of time till it reach you; which strikes me as a neat, inexpensive, and effectual way of reaching that goal of all authors, posterity. From father to son, and from grandson to great-grandson.

Provided, of course, they shall all have the courage (as I intend to have) to get married. If not—or what would become of the book, should there be twins?—but I leave these details to take care of themselves. One of them might not live, for example.

On second thought, though, it might be as well to have two copies struck off; yes, and while we are about it, a dozen extra ones, for private distribution among my friends.

8.

And one friend, especially, but for whom this nonsense would not now be bubbling up so serenely from my tranquil soul.

9.

I have just had a conversation with my publisher, which greatly disturbs me.

He tells me that all this talk about limiting the edition to a dozen copies is midsummer madness,—where am I to come in? said he, using the language of the period,—and that he intends to print as many copies as he pleases. So everything is upset. And I shall have to recast my entire work, which, you must know, is already, with the exception of this first chapter, finished and ready for the printer, down to the last semicolon. For, as it stands, my boy, everything I say is addressed to you only; and my book may be compared to a telephone with a private wire three hundred years long. But since my publisher is going to give the general public the right to hook on and hear what I am saying, it is extremely probable that my monologue will be very often interrupted. Whenever, therefore, you find me suddenly ceasing to speak to you personally, and, after a word with my contemporaries, dropping back to our private wire, you may be sure that there has been a “Hello?” and a “Who’s that?” and a “Well, good-by!” somewhere along a cross-line.

10.

And this is the thing that I feel that I have to say:

I would tell you something of the land of your forefathers. Something of Virginia. Not new Virginia,—not West Virginia,—but the Old Dominion and her people, such as they were when Plancus was consul. And, first of all, I will tell you why I have thought it worth while to lay the following sketches before you.

11.

The world, in my day, is full of unrest. Everywhere anxious care and the eager struggle for wealth. Mr. Spencer’s Gospel of Recreation finds few adherents, and the Genius of Repose seems to have winged its way to other spheres.

And I fear matters will be worse in your day; and, just as one, on a broiling July afternoon, looks with a real, though evanescent, pleasure upon pictured polar bears gambolling amid icebergs (in the show-window of a soda-water shop), so I cannot but think that it

would be a genuine boon to you could I but lead you for an hour from out the dust and heat and turmoil of your life and bid you cease striving for a little while, while I (I, too, forgetting for a moment that every crust must be fought for), while I reproduce from out the cool caves of my memory certain scenes that I have witnessed.

True, some of them I have not seen with my own eyes, but Charley has, or else Alice, which is just as well.

12.

Yes, my lad, I think the glimpses I am about to give you of the old Virginia life will refresh your tired soul. Just as it refreshes mine to draw the pictures for you. For from me, as well, the reality has vanished. Our civil war (war of the rebellion, as the underbred among the victors still call it) swept that into the abyss of the past; but let me with such poor wand as I wield summon it before you.

In Pompeii, the tourist, looking from blank wall to dusty floor, wonders what there is to see in that little hall; but a native goes down upon his hands and knees; with a few brisk passes of his hand the sand is brushed away, and a Numidian lion glares forth from the tessellated pavement. So I, brushing aside the fast-settling dust, would make you see that old life as I saw it.

And, strangely enough, I, too, have a lion to show you. For, while my real object was by a series of sketches to bring into clear relief the careless ease, the sweet tranquillity, the unapproachable serenity of those old days, I did not see my way to making these sketches interesting. (For not alone in a repast for the body is the serving almost everything.) But the thought occurred to me to stitch them together with the thread of a story into a kind of panorama. For this story I had to find a hero. To invent one would have been, I am sure, quite beyond my powers; and what I should have done I am at a loss to conjecture had I not found one ready made to my hand: a very remarkable young man, that is, who in a very remarkable way suddenly made his appearance upon the boards of our little

theatre, upon which were serenely enacting the tranquil scenes in which I would steep your care-worn soul. This is the lion that I have to show you. And when he begins to shake his mane and lash his sides, you will find things growing a trifle lurid in our little impromptu drama. Absolutely none of which was upon the original programme. But dropping from the sky, as it were, in the midst of our troupe, what should he do but straightway fall in love with one of our pretty little actresses. And then the trouble began and the tranquillity came to an end.

13.

As for me, the manager of the show, you will see that I have done my best to relieve the gloom. Between the acts,—between the scenes,—nay, even while they are going on,—you shall find me continually popping out before the foot-lights and interrupting the play, and raking the audience with a rattling rigmarole. All for the sake of keeping their spirits up. And on more than one occasion I go the length (or breadth, as Alice suggests) of standing on my head and making faces at Charley in the prompter's box. How I should have gotten on had he not sat there, or without Alice in the wings (to superintend the love-passages), I am sure I cannot tell. And if, at the end of the play, I am called before the curtain, I shall refuse to budge unless hand in hand with my two co-workers; who, though content to be for the most part silent partners in this undertaking, have really put in most of the capital.

14.

It is understood, then, between us, Ah Yung, that while this story is composed for your delectation, the injunctions of my publisher force me to recognize the possibility of contemporary readers. The situation is awkward. As though a third person were present at a confidential interview. Ah, I have it.

While I am talking to you, the contemporary reader may nod; and when I turn to her, you have leave to nap it. And small blame to the contemporary reader.

For what I shall say to you will seem to her (and especially my didactic spurts) the merest rubbish.

Every school-boy knows that, she will say.

But I am not to be put down by this crushing and familiar phrase of our day, which simply means that the fact in question is known to the Able-Editor, who looked it up in the cyclopædia on his desk an hour since. Every school-boy in ancient times knew, for instance, what kind of a school Aristotle went to, and how he was taught, and what. Aspasia, we may feel sure, knew no German, nor had even a smattering of French; while all conceivable ologies were so much Greek to her. And yet she must have known something. For statesmen and philosophers flocked to her boudoir, and, when she spoke, sat at her feet, silent and wondering. What had she been taught, and how? Every contemporary school-girl knew. What audience could be found now in the wide world that could keep pace with the eloquence of Demosthenes? How had the Athenian populace been taught? For they were more wonderful than their orator. Ah, how much would we not give to know! But no one thought it worth his while to set it all down in a little book; and we know not, and must darkly guess. Else would we rise as one man, and, rushing with torches to all the colleges and universities of the land, incinerate within their costly walls their armies of professors, along with the hordes of oarsmen and acrobats that they annually empty on the world.

A Porch sufficed for Zeno.

Ah, there are thousands of little things which they might have told us, but did not. Ah, that Homer, for instance, had described Helen to us as minutely as he did the shield of Achilles. As it is, we must even conjecture that she had a Grecian nose. And as for her eyes and hair—

And the song the Sirens sang, what was the tune of it? How much would I not have given to hear my dear old grandfather play it on his fiddle!

And how did Socrates make out without a pipe after dinner while Xantippe was explaining to him how many kinds of a worthless husband he was?

Ah, we shall never know! Therefore, my boy, I am determined you shall know something about the Virginians in my day. But excuse me for one moment,—my telephone-bell is ringing.

15.

Some stranger has hooked on.

"Hello!"

"Do you claim that Virginia has ever produced a Socrates?"

"Who's there?"

"Boston."

"I do not."

"Ever see a Virginia Xantippe?"

"Well, good-by!"

This is the way I am likely to be interrupted throughout the entire course of my story. True, I shall leave out the hello and good-by part of the business as too realistic, but you will know when they have been hooking on from my stopping to argue with my supposed readers. By the way, if this chapter bears, to your mind, internal evidence of having been composed in Bedlam, you will understand how it has fared with me when I tell you that I had hardly spoken a dozen words when my telephone began to ring like mad. A thousand cross-lines at least must have been connected with our private wire before my first sentence was finished. Heavens, what a jingling they are keeping up even now! I must speak with them.

"Hello! hello! hello!—Good-by! good-by! good-by!"

And why all this clatter, do you suppose?

It is nearly all about these seven words in my opening sentence,—*Thine almond eye, my Ah Yung Whack.*

I shall analyze the questions and remarks of the first hundred as a sample of the thousands.

Of this number, three announced themselves as authors of English grammars, adding that they could not sustain me unless I changed *my ah* to *ah my*; and of the three, one that I should have said Virginian instead of Virginia Xantippe; quoting a rule from his own

grammar. Which I was glad he did, seeing that I had never read a line in any English grammar in my born days; and I find that when you are writing a book no kind of knowledge comes amiss.

I answered him (per telephone) by this question in political economy: whether he thought that by a judicious tariff Massachusettsish enterprise would ever be enabled to raise Indian rubber under glass at a profit and successfully compete with the pauper labor of the sun; and, springing nimbly from political to domestic economy, I trusted that his next Thanksgiving Turkish gobbler would sit light on his stomach. And this I meant, once for all, as a defiance to the whole tribe of grammarians, be they living, dead, or yet unborn.

After the three grammarians come seven spelling reformers, congratulating me on my courage in writing yung instead of young. [How they found this out by tapping my telephone I will explain later, if I have time.] And of these, one, who was also a short-hand writer, thought Whack an improvement on Whacker.

All the remainder of the hundred—that is, ninety—were young ladies.

There is a certain insinuating witchery about the unmarried voice of woman (among males all widowers have it) that is not to be mistaken, even through a telephone. That is, when addressed to an unmarried ear.

Of these ninety, every solitary one asked, "Have *you* almond eyes?" (for young ladies can underscore, even over a wire), and forty-three of them added, "Oh, how cute!" and forty-seven, "My, how cunning!"

And of these ninety, eighty-nine added that, by a strange coincidence, they, too, were unmarried; the remaining one saying that she was single. She, I take it, was a young widow; especially as she went on to say that she feared that I was a sad, bad, bold, fascinating wretch to speak in my half-frivolous, half-business-like way of the holy estate of matrimony, which had been commended even of St. Paul. She added that she had often been told that her own eyes sloped a little.

16.

Now you, my boy, know perfectly well that you are called Whack. Nor will it strike you that I have reformed the spelling of your Confucian name, Yung. As to the Ah, you will smile at its being mistaken by a Western barbarian for an interjection. But you do not know, and will be amazed to hear, that you have almond eyes. For you have never seen any other variety. This, therefore, strikes me as a fitting opportunity for explaining to you and the contemporary reader why I began with those seven mysterious words. You, at least, can hardly regret their use, since it was the means of showing you how many candidates there were for the honor of being your great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandmother. The aspirants had never seen me, it is true. So that *I* am not puffed up.

Puffed up? Alas, yes, that is my trouble! Hence my long delay. Woman after woman has admitted that my smile is sweet, my voice low, my ways winning.

His soul is beautiful, they say; then why *will* he waddle when he walks?

And waddling is mirth-provoking to every daughter of Eve, and laughter is fatal to love.

17.

Not one word of the caballistic seven would I have written but for two very singular dreams which I had. And this is the way, so far as I can make out, that I chanced to dream the first one.

The line of Bishop Berkeley, to the effect that the star of empire is constantly moving west, is naturally a favorite with patriots in this country. It is in everybody's mouth. I have heard it cited, you could not imagine how often; so often, to put it plainly, that I would undertake to reckon up on my fingers and toes the number of times I have not heard it. Western journalists, especially, see their way to quoting it so frequently that they keep it always in stock, electrotyped and ready for use at a moment's notice (when a commercial traveller registers at the local hotel, for

instance). Not a *Weekly* is set up as the organ of the pioneerest water-tank of a Western railway, but you shall see this verse figure in the first leader. Now it was this line which, though not the exciting cause of the first of my two dreams, gave direction to it, at least.

A friend had sent me a San Francisco paper, and meeting the familiar line therein, I began wondering to myself, as I lay upon my lounge, where the star of empire could go now, seeing that there was no longer any West left; and, reading on, half awake, after a late supper, and seeing in every column allusions to the glorious climate of California (in worn type), I asked myself, with a drowsy smile, whether it were not to reach this same glorious climate, perhaps, that the star in question had been bending her steps westward throughout recorded time.

If she is to go any further—I dozed—I—she—will have—to—wade—and I fell asleep!

18.

How long I slept I cannot say; but long enough to dream this:

Dream I.—[Welsh rarebit.]

America, at last (so it seemed to me in my vision), is full; and thousands upon thousands of our redundant population are pouring into Asia,—you among the rest; for your day had come,—and you are all as busy as bees, cutting the throats of the heathen, in order to bring them to a true knowledge of the living God, and secure their lands,—as our ancestors have served the treacherous and implacable Red Men.

(When I speak of your cutting their throats, I speak as a man of my time; for it would be the veriest presumption in a mortal of this benighted day to restrict heroes in the blaze of the twenty-third century to such vulgar and ineffectual methods of destroying their fellow-men. Indeed, I must do myself the justice to say that, when I ventured to dream of you as storming the ranges of Thian-Shan and the Kuen-Lun, into which have fled the deluded remnants of the followers of Confucius (of whom, at the date of this dream, you were

not one), I did not take the liberty of picturing you to myself, even in a vision of the night-time, as laboriously toiling up those rugged slopes, convincing, as you go, the unregenerate, by the unanswerable suasion of breech-loading cannon and repeating rifles,—lame contrivances of our less-favored age; but)

Before my closed, yet prophetic eye, you float a beautiful, aerial host of missionary heroes and real-estate agents, flecking the sky with innumerable winged craft. There! I see the line halt! A rock-bound fastness lies just ahead! A captain's yacht—a kind of mechanical American eagle, an 'twere—darts forward through the limpid air, and poises itself just over the enemy, a mile above the earth. A field telephone drops into the fortress, and a parley is held. Unsatisfactory! for an officer in the uniform of the *Flying Chemists*, leaning lightly over the starboard gunwale, lets fall into the stronghold, with admirable precision, a homœopathic globule of the triple-refined quintessence of the double extract of dynamite. It is finished! Peace on earth, good will toward men! What was, a moment since, a heaven-piercing peak, is now a hole in the ground,—what were, just now, the adherents of an effete theology, in the twinkling of an eye are converted, if not into Christians, at least into almond-eyed angels,—and the victors can read their title clear to mansions near the skies, and to the rice-fields of the Yang-tsi-Kiang, or the tea-orchards of the Hoang-Ho.

I am persuaded that every fair-minded man will allow this to have been a dream that not even Pharaoh need have blushed to own. I feel that it does me credit. But would it have been prudent in me (as a professional dreamer) to see that one vision, and then, as we lawyers say, rest my case? Perhaps I had gone all astray. Who is this Bishop Berkeley, after all? *Have* men, in their migrations, always followed the sun? Who destroyed the Mound-Builders? and whence came they? and their destroyers? from the East? or from the West?

To certain insects, which live but a single day, the winds may very well seem to blow always in one direc-

tion; and there may be in the affairs of men a tide which ebbs and flows in æons rather than in hours. And what is the meaning of this cloud-speck rising along the Pacific coast? Is the nineteenth century, so remarkable in many respects (for instance, brag), to usher in an era as yet unsuspected? Is the tide trembling at its utmost flood,—and is the reflux upon us? Are the “lower orders” the real prophets, as they have ever been before? And is their animosity against the Chinese but a blind feeling of the truth that in these new-comers the European races have met their masters? Can it be that under the contempt expressed for them as inferiors there lurks a secret, unrealized sense of their real superiority?

For wherein do we surpass the Indian whom we are so rapidly supplanting? In two things: endurance under toil and strength to hoard,—industry and self-denial. By force of these traits we have driven the Red Men from their homes. And now, on the Pacific, we meet a race as superior to us in these qualities as we are to the Indian or the negro.

Obviously, therefore, if I would get at the bottom of the business, it behooved me to see another vision. It was not long in coming. The very next day a party of us jurists had luncheon together, and I ate, of all things in the world—

Well, returning to my office, I threw myself upon my lounge, and took up a law-book, stood it upon the bosom of my shirt, and opened it at the *Rule in Shelley's Case*. If a man have nothing on his conscience, this justly celebrated rule will put him to sleep in ten minutes.

19.

Before I lay down, therefore, I locked my door; for the spectacle of a sleeping lawyer must ever be a painful surprise to a client.

Dream II.—[Canned lobster.]

Presently I heard a gentle rap. “Come in,” said I. And in there stalked a most surprising figure.

Now, if I had had my wits about me, I should have known it was a dream; for how could he have gotten

in with the door locked? So I suppose I must have dreamed that it was not a dream. At any rate, there he was. A Chinaman,—but tall, athletic, and gorgeously arrayed in brocaded silks. A low bow, full of grace and dignity. I rose hastily, without either the one or the other.

"Ah Ying Kee," said he, with another bow, at the same time lightly touching his left breast with the tips of the fingers of his right hand.

"Be seated, Mr. Kee," said I, offering him a chair.

"Thanks; I have the honor of addressing Mr. Yang Kee?"

The afternoon was furiously hot. My man had the chest and neck of Hercules. So I contented myself with the haughty reply that my name was Whacker.

"No doubt,—no doubt," replied he, with a courteous wave of the hand. "In a general way you are quite right; but for the special purpose of my visit permit me to insist that you are Mr. Yang Kee."

It flashed across my mind that I was dealing with a large lunatic, and my anger cooled.

"Very well," said I, "if you will have it so. I was never called a Yankee before, that's all."

"No doubt; nor have you the least idea that you are one. Still, I venture to remark—with your kind permission—that such is practically the fact. To your eye and ear there are differences between your people and those of Connecticut, just as I have no difficulty in distinguishing an inhabitant of the district of Hing Chang from a dweller on the banks of the Fi Fum. To you we are all Chinese. To us, Americans are all Yankees. Orientals, occidentals. Let Ying Kee stand for the one, Yang Kee for the other."

"You don't say Melican man?"

"No; I am not a washerwoman," replied he, with a smile. "I am a member of the imperial diplomatic corps, and, if you will permit me to say so, a gentleman."

I gave him to understand that he was more than welcome. (He was six feet two, if he was an inch.)

"Thanks. But my object in calling—"

My retainer would be a stiff one, never fear—

“I call, not as a diplomat, but as a philosopher.”

I sighed the sigh of a jurisconsult.

“I come to discuss with you a dream which I understand you have done us Chinese the honor to dream about us.”

I had not mentioned my dream to a soul. How had he heard of it? I never once dreamt that I was dreaming again.

“You, too, I understand, are a philosopher,—the greatest philosopher, if common fame may be relied on, throughout the length and breadth—”

I gave my hand a deprecatory wave. “Don’t mention it,” said I.

“Throughout the length and breadth of Henrico County,—*Hanraker*, as the natives call it.”

“You are strong on geography.”

“It is made my business by my government to know America. But let’s to our discussion. But is not your office rather close quarters? Might I beg you to walk with me?”

“Where shall we go?” I asked, when we reached the sidewalk.

“What do you say to Rocketts?”

“Rocketts!” I exclaimed; “you *are* strong on geography!”

“Rocketts?” said he, with a bland smile; “who does not know that it is the port of Richmond, just as the Piræus was that of Athens?”

I cannot imagine why I put all these fine phrases in his mouth, unless it was because I had read in the papers, not long before, that the Parisians pronounced the manners of the Chinese embassy perfect.

And here I may remark, for the benefit of science, that though the thermometer was at ninety in the shade, I was not conscious of the heat during our long walk. Yet—and it shows that it costs a fat man something even to dream of toil—yet, when I awoke, my brow looked as though I had been earning my bread, whereas a lawyer, as we know, confines himself to earning some other fellow’s.

"And now, Mr. Yang Kee," said he, as we took our seats in a corner of the docks of the Old Dominion Line, "and now for this very remarkable dream of yours; and permit me to begin by observing that, the central conception of your dream being vicious, the whole business falls to pieces."

I threw my eyebrows into the form of a couple of interrogation-points.

"You have been at the pains of dreaming that your people are to conquer mine through the instrumentality of armed colonization. Those days, when entire nations—men, women, and children—migrated, sword in hand, are over. Instead of migration we have emigration,—the movement of individuals instead of the movement of tribes; in place of the *Helvetii*—"

"Mr. Kee, your learning amazes me!"

"It's all in Confucius," said he, modestly. "Instead of the *Helvetii* devastating Gaul, the Swiss waiter lies in ambush against the small change of Christendom. It is no longer warrior against warrior, but man against man. It is not a question of—"

Mr. Kee hesitated, and a subtle smile played over his features.

"Go on," said I.

"These are the days, I was going to say, of the survival of the fittest, rather than the fightest."

"Go it, Ying!" cried I; at the same time fetching him a rouser between the shoulders with my rather heavy hand. In my enthusiasm I had forgotten his high rank. I began to stammer out an apology.

"It is nothing," said he. "It makes me know that you are a good fellow," added he, at the same time shaking hands with himself, after the manner of his people, with the utmost cordiality.

I do not suppose that a native ever puns without a certain sense of shame; but I confess to enjoying it in a foreigner. He is always as proud as a boy whistling his first tune.

"A Caucasian army is vastly superior to a Mongolian; a Caucasian individual vastly inferior."

I smiled.

"Oh," said he, "I know what your politicians say; and I find no fault with them, for they make their living by saying—judicious things. The Chinaman works for nothing and lives upon rice, so that a decent American working-man cannot compete with him. Moreover, he persists in returning to China. He won't stay, therefore he must go. Moreover, a Celestial is a heathen, while you, dear voters, are all pious and good!"

As he said this, accompanying the remark with a wink of Oriental subtlety, we both, with a common impulse, burst into a laugh so loud that a large rat, which we had observed as he cautiously stole up towards a broken egg which lay upon the dock, precipitately scampered off and down into his hole.

"Oh, I don't blame your statesmen. They, just as others, have a trade by which wives and children must be fed and clothed. Moreover,"—and leaning forward and confidentially tapping my round and shapely knee with his yellow hand, he whispered,—“moreover, your statesmen are right!” and, straightening up, he paused, enjoying my surprise. “The sentimentality of Pocahontas,” he resumed, with a wave of his hand in the direction of Jamestown, “was the ruin of her people. Opecanacanough was a prophet and a statesman. Had the Indians slain the Europeans as fast as they landed—”

Just then the rat thrust his sharp muzzle out of his hiding-place and warily swept the dock with his jet-bead eye. Mr. Kee turned upon him his almond oval and smiled.

“I thank thee, good rat,” he cried; “for thou art both an illustration and a prophecy. Hundreds of years ago, the blue rat held sway on this continent, while you squeaked unknown in the mountains of Persia.”

“’Tis a Norway rat,” I put in.

“No,” said he, quietly, “he is of Persian origin, and migrated to China ages ago, during the reign, to be exact, of Ying Lung Fo. You will find it laid down in Confucius, in his great work, ‘Bang Lie Yu,’—*concerning all things*, as you would say in English.”

I wonder whether he likes them best broiled or fricasseed? thought I.

"The real Norway rat is little larger than a field-mouse. Your term Norway rat is simply a popular corruption of gnaw-away rat, given him as the most strikingly rodential of rodents."

"To be found, I suppose," said I, "in Confucius's lesser work, 'Fool Hoo Yu,' or, *concerning a few other things*, as we say in English."

"You have me there!" replied he, with the most winkish of winks. "But we digress. Where is the blue rat now? Perhaps a few specimens might be found, falling back, with the Red Men, upon the Rocky Mountains. And where will the Caucasian race be three centuries [his very figures] hence? Your statesmen are right, but, like Opecanough, right too late. Your race is doomed; not, indeed, to extinction, for already the despised Mongol begins to find wives among you; but you will be crossed out of existence by a superior and prepotent race. Look at me," said he, giving himself a slap upon his broad chest; "do I look like an inferior specimen of—there he comes again!"

Looking, I saw the rat, stealthily creeping toward the egg, his larboard eye covering us, his starboard fixed upon a cat that lay dozing in the shadow of a post.

"There he is, that intruder from Persia, and he will remain with you. Housewives may poison, here and there, a score of them,—the survivors take warning; pussy may lie in wait,—he learns to avoid—even to bully her. Terriers may dig down into their hiding-places,—they will bore others. An incautious youngster gets his leg in a trap,—his squeal is a liberal education to the entire colony. He has an infinite capacity for adjusting himself to his environment. He is here for good; and so is the Chinaman. Congress may legislate against him; it will be a Papal bull against a comet. Mobs may assail him, trade-unions damn him; but the Chinaman will not go. And myriads more, the survivors of ages of a fearful struggle for existence at home, will pour in. He will not go. He will come; and between Ying Kee and Yang Kee the fittest will survive."

"Westward," began I, "westward the star of empire—"

"Scat!" cried he, leaping from his seat.

Our rat, having, at last, after many advances and retreats, secured the egg, was making off with it to his hole, when the cat, awakening, sprang after him. Down he plunged into his hole, bearing off the egg, but leaving an inch of his tail under pussy's paws.

"Scat!" cried I, rushing to the rat's assistance,—and bump! I fell upon the floor.

Ah Ying had vanished. My door was still locked. It had all been a dream.

20.

No, my boy, I am not a candidate for the Presidency. This is no hook baited with the Chinese question. My object is merely to explain how you happen to have almond eyes. And if you don't, you will understand that it is no fault of mine. The Welsh rarebit dream overcame the canned lobster vision,—that's all. And having made this clear to you, as I hope, the time has come for me to say a few words about myself.

21.

When this book shall be, on your twenty-first birthday, laid beside your plate, at breakfast, by your thoughtful yellow father, I have no doubt that you will ask him, before even you begin to play your chopsticks, who wrote it. Now, what will it avail you for him to say that it was written by John Bouche Whacker, of the Richmond bar? Who *was* John Bouche Whacker? And that question means (at least since Mr. Charles Darwin wrote) who was the father and who the mother of J. B. W.; and the father and mother of this pair, and so on, and so on.

Now, I suppose that if I were to push the inquiry into prehistoric times, it would turn out that I was related to the entire Indo-Germanic race; but I shall content myself with indicating to you the three chief strains of blood which mingle in my veins, leaving to you, as you read chapter after chapter, this entertaining ethnological puzzle: Who spoke there? The Dane? or was it the Saxon? As to my Huguenot blood, there will be

no hiding that. It will always be on fire, at the merest suggestion of a dogma of theology.

22.

I.—THE WHACKERS.

Every school-boy knows that, no sooner had their brave Queen Boadicea perished, than the Britons lost all stomach for fighting, and gave themselves up wholly to roast beef and plum pudding. Nor is it a secret, that when the Roman legions, to whom they had learned to look for protection, were withdrawn from the island, the Picts and Scots, grown weary of oat-meal, began to trouble the more sumptuous feasts of their neighbors. Remonstrances proving fruitless, they sent for the Jutes and the Saxons and the Angles (so called, respectively, from a valuable plant, a fine variety of wool, and a singular devotion to fishing). These sturdy braves crossed the water with their renowned battle-axes, as every school-boy knows. But what even our very learned young friend does not, perhaps, suspect, is that, along with Hengist and Horsa, there sailed, on this historical occasion, two twin brothers, named respectively Ethelbert and Alfred Whacker,—or Hvaecere, as they themselves would have spelled it, had they thought spelling, of any sort, worth their heroic while; which, haply, they did not. Now, from these twins I am lineally descended, as you shall see duly set forth in the *Whacker Records*, herewith transmitted. You will find in these family annals, too, some details not sufficiently elaborated, perhaps, in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and other authorities for this period. There is the barest allusion, for instance, to the brave death of Ethelbert Hvaecere, the eldest of the twins, which occurred as follows:

23.

When the English (for such recent historians have shown that they were, and not Germans, as they themselves, absurdly enough, supposed themselves to be)—when the English reached the Wall of Severus, they found that earth-work lined, for miles, with Picts and

Scots. So, at least, they were named in Pinnock's Goldsmith's England, which I read at school. So, too, you will find they are called in the *Whacker Records*. Recent historical research, however, has demonstrated that the so-called Picts were, in reality, painted Scotchmen, while the alleged Scots were neither more nor less than Irishmen. And I must confess that when I re-read the *Whacker Records* by these modern lights, I was ashamed that I had not made this discovery myself.

It would appear that the west of Scotland was originally settled by the Irish; and that those who remained at home took so lively an interest in their emigrated brethren, that whenever they got news of a wake or other shindy that was brewing beyond the Channel, they would shoot across in their canoes, or else—so surprisingly low were the tides in those simple days—wade across and join in the fray; as they did on the present occasion.

24.

You and I have no special interest in Hengist's attack on the tattooed Scotchmen on the enemy's left; for the two Hvaeceres fought under Horsa, on our left.

And things looked so strange to Horsa, as he approached the enemy, that this wily captain called a halt and sent word to Hengist to delay the attack till he could look into matters a little. And this is what he observed, standing a little in front of his line, with the two Hvaeceres (who constituted his staff) by his side.

In the first place, the weapons which these so-called Scots were waving above their heads were not claymores, as he had been led to expect. Instead, they brandished stout, blackish, knotted clubs, and to the accompaniment, not of the shrill bagpipe or the rhythmic slogan, but with fierce and discordant cries. One thing he remarked with grim satisfaction. Standing in dense masses, and whirling their clubs with more fervor than care, it constantly happened that a neighboring head got a tap; and no sooner had this occurred (giving forth a singularly solid sound) than it instantly set up a local internecine fracas of such severity that, at times, considerable spaces of the wall

were denuded of defenders; who, tumbling into the transmural ditch, fought fiercely there. In a few minutes, however, they would reappear, smiling, as though they had been seeing fun of some sort, over there beyond the wall. Once, indeed, one of the combatants,—a little bow-legged fellow,—bringing down his shillaleh (which is Celtic for hickory) with a sounding thwack upon the bare head of a burly opponent, knocked him down the slope of the wall on our side, and, standing upon the edge of the wall, with his thumb to his nose, jeered at him.

"Who hit Maginnis?" cried he in Gaelic; and even the Maginnises roared with laughter. Nay, grim Horsa, too, was observed to smile; for he knew their language well, having learned it during his many incursions into Gaul.

But, just at this moment, Hengist riding up, and seeing our men seated on the ground, and laughing, as though at a show, flew into a rage; for, like his maternal uncle, Ariovistus, he was of an ungovernable temper; and asked his brother Horsa what in the Walhalla he meant. "Do you call this business?" added he,—for he was an Anglo-Saxon.

"I am giving them time to knock out each other's brains," replied Horsa, in his slow-spoken way.

"Then will you wait till doomsday," replied the humorous monarch; and galloping back to his lines, well pleased with his sally, he ordered an immediate advance upon the pictured Macgregors in his front.

We charged too. (I have read the account so often that I cannot help thinking I was there.) And it was then that Horsa discovered the meaning of a reddish line along the top of the wall in his front. Observing no signs of missile weapons among the enemy, he had flattered himself that he would easily have the mastery over them, with his terrible battle-axes against their shillalehs. But when we got within thirty feet of them (not before) they stooped as one man and rose again. An instant more and we thought that Thor was raining his thunder-bolts upon our shields. Our men went down by hundreds. A reddish mist filled the air.

'Twas brick-dust!

With such prodigious force did they hurl their national weapon (shamrock is the pretty name of it in the Gael) against our shields, that, where it did not go through, it was reduced to powder.

We stood a long while, stunned, blinded, bewildered; suffering heavily, doing nothing in reply. At last there was a slight lull in the storm of missiles; for as they had each brought over but a peck of ammunition, in their corduroys, the more impetuous among them were beginning to run short; and it was then that our sturdy ancestor showed the stuff he was made of. Assuming command (for Horsa, with Alfred Hvacere by his side, lay insensible upon the grass), "Men," cried he, "why do we stand here? Remember Quintilius Varus and his legions! To your axes! to your axes!" And the whole line staggered forward, with Ethelbert well in front and bearing down upon Maginnis. (The same,—though his mother would scarcely have known him, with that blue-black bulge in his forehead.) And it is mainly from an observation that Maginnis made at this juncture that I am inclined to give in my adhesion to the hypothesis of the later historians, who claim that these men were not Scots.

"Erin go bragh!" cried the undaunted chieftain, reaching down into his trousers for a reserve brick,—an heirloom,—black, glistening, hard as flint, mother of wakes—

"Thor smash thee!" cried the Hvacere; and tossing away his shield, he lifted aloft, in both hands, his mighty axe. It trembled in the air, ready to descend.

Too late,—for the brick of Maginnis landed square between the hero's eyes,—and you and I had to be descended from the younger brother.

25.

The Whackers, therefore, are not ancestors that one needs blush to own.* But I have not meant to boast.

* I sometimes wonder how some people can plume themselves on their descent, though able to trace it back only to the Norman Conquest.

Else had I been unworthy of them. They were Anglo-Saxon; and when I have said that, I have said that they had a certain sturdy love of truth, for which this race is conspicuous. And so this book may be absurd, or even wicked, nay, worst of all, dull; but one thing you may rely upon. Every word in it will be true.

26.

II.—THE DANICHESTERS.

It did not seem so while I was writing it, but now that my book is finished, it strikes me as one of the oddest works I have ever read. You can never tell what is coming next. Even to me it was a series of surprises. Read the first ten lines of any chapter. Now read the last ten. Heavens, how did he get there! I seem never to know whither, or how far I am going. It has been the same with me all my life. Often, as a boy, I have set out for a neighbor's on a mule, and not gone all the way.

Another singular trait about this book is what I must be allowed to call its unconscious humor. A strange thing to say about one's own book; but somehow, when I am reading it, I can't shake off the impression that some other fellow wrote it, or that I wrote it in my sleep,—so many things do I find in it which I could almost swear I never thought of in my life. And there are a dozen passages in it where I slapped my thigh, crying out, Good! Good! And more than once I caught myself saying, By Jove, I should like to know the old boy who wrote this!

Yet, never in my life was I more serious than when I sat down to write this work; for it was the solemn, theological, Huguenot molecules of my brain that set me to writing; and the book was to be too grave to bring a ripple to the beak of a Laughing Jackass,—that jovial kingfisher whose professional hilarity cheers the lone Australian shepherd.

Now, since man—as every college-boy knows—and it is well to know something—since man is but the sum of his ancestors modified by his environment,

whence have I derived this trait of mine, this unconscious humor,—the gift, that is, of making people laugh without intending it? Many persons have it, but where did *I* get it?

Not from the business-like Whackers, surely. Still less from the Pope-hating Bouches. I must derive it from my Danichester blood. From this source, too, I must get another characteristic,—that of being sad when others are gay. In the midst of piping and fiddling I sometimes ask my heart what is the use of it all. And oftentimes, while I have stood smiling as I looked upon a group of merry children at play, I could feel the tears trickling back upon my heart.

Family traits are generally modified (Darwin, *passim*) from generation to generation. Thus, the grandson of a painter will be a musician, perhaps; and many literary people are sons of clergymen. There is similarity rather than identity. And so this vein of sadness, which lies so deep in me that few or none of my friends have ever suspected its existence, crops out in one of my progenitors. I allude to Olaf Danichester, Gent., whose daughter Gunhilda was married to John Whacker, merchant, London, in the seventeenth year of the reign of glorious Queen Bess.

Now, from all accounts, this ancestor of ours had a most extraordinary way of saying things that no one else would ever have thought of; added to which was the singularity that, after he had run through the fortune brought to him by his second wife, he was never known to smile. And it is no secret to the Whacker connection (though not generally known in literary circles) that the immortal Shakespeare, who often sat with him over a cold cut and a tankard of ale in the parlor of his prosperous son-in-law (J. W.), has embalmed him for posterity in the melancholy Jaques.

Now, the difference between Olaf Danichester and myself is simply that he gave utterance to his sad thoughts, while I keep mine to myself. I am a mere modification of him, just as he was of his valiant progenitor, Vagn Akason, the Viking. This Vagn, though an eminent waterman in his day, did not come over to

America in the *Mayflower*,—chiefly because he was killed centuries before she sailed, but in part, also, because he felt no wish to make others worship God after his fashion; which was a very poor fashion, I fear, from the account given of him in our Records. At any rate, he was a marvellously handsome fellow, this Viking bold; and when he went forth to battle, a storm of yellow hair, as Motherwell says, floated over his broad shoulders,—so that he looked for all the world like Lohengrin. But I suspect he was not the kind of man we should select, at the present day, as superintendent of a Sunday-school. For one thing, he was a most omnipotous drinker; nor should I ever have admitted that I had a drop of his blood in my veins had it not been necessary for me, as a Darwinian, to account for my unconscious humor. And if these words savor of conceit, let us call it my trick of saying and doing the most unexpected things. Hear the account of the death of this brave young sea-rover, and see whether I do not come honestly by this trait:

He, with seventeen of his companions, had been captured, and had been made, according to the custom of those rude days, to straddle a large log, one behind the other, with their hands tied behind their backs. Up came, then, the victor, Jarl Hakon (after a leisurely breakfast of pork chops), to strike off their heads. This, to us, seems unkind; but having one's head chopped off was such a matter of course in those days that no one ever thought for an instant of minding it in the least. Give and take was the way they looked at it.

But brave as these men were in the presence of the headsman, they shuddered at the very thought of a barber. They gloried in their long hair. To lose their heads was an incident of war; to lose their locks a disgrace which followed them even into the next world. According to a superstition of theirs, a Sea-Cavalier who lost his curls just before parting with his head was doomed to be a Roundhead ghost and a laughing-stock throughout eternity.

Up strode the fierce headsman, Tharkell Leire, and

bade the captive Viking lean forward and lay his golden hair upon the log. He obeyed, but held his calm, sky-blue eye upon the glittering axe, and, quick as a flash, as it descended, covered his fair curls with his fairer neck. And when his seventeen comrades, who sat there waiting their turn, saw how their wily captain had outwitted their enemy, and how he raged thereat, they roared with Sea-King laughter.

27.

III.—THE BOUCHES.

Every school-boy knows what the Edict of Nantes was; but philosophers differ as to what was the effect of its revocation upon the fortunes of France. For us it is enough to know that Louis XIV., by recalling it, drove to Virginia our ancestor John Bouche, whose daughter, Elizabeth, completely captivated my great etc. grandfather, Tom Whacker, by her pretty French accent and trim French figure. She was good and wise, too; but the rascal never found that out till after he married her. It must be owing to the Danichester strain, I suppose, that the Whackers, so sensible in many ways, have always sought grace and beauty in their wives, rather than piety and learning; and I suppose I shall be no wiser than my fathers when my time comes.

This Huguenot cross gave the old Whacker stock a twist towards theology. Two of the sons of Thomas and Elizabeth took orders, much to the surprise of their father, who used to say that *Reverend Whacker* had a queer sound to his ear. So prepotent, in fact, has the Huguenot strain become, that a Whacker is no longer a Whacker. In the old days our eyes were as blue as the sky; now they are as black as sloes. Once we were reserved and silent; now—but enough. As for myself, it has often seemed to me that I was all Bouche,—Bouche *et præterea nihil*,—as the ancient Romans put it in their compact way.

Needless to say, therefore, that this book was to instruct and edify you. You may see that from the very first sentence of it all that I wrote:

"And, now in conclusion, my dear boy, if you rise from the perusal of this work a wiser and better man, the direct author of the book and the indirect author of your being will feel amply repaid for all his toil."

Such were my intentions. And now read the book, as it stands. Heavens and earth, was there ever such another! Alas, those Danichester molecules, what have they not made me say! Page after page, and chapter after chapter, in which I defy even a mouse to pick up a crumb of edification. Chapter after chapter of feasting, fiddling, dancing, courting,—roast turkeys, broiled oysters, hams seven years old. Bowls full of egg-nogg, pipes full of tobacco, students full of apple-toddy,—everything to make a man feel good, nothing to make him be good. For the heathen Viking in me speaks!

Yet he does not hold entire sway. But as we sit—you and I and the friends you shall presently make—sit joyously picnicking in a fair wood—more than once the trees above us, as you shall find, will seem to moan, as they bend before the gentle breeze. 'Tis the spirit of the melancholy Jaques, perched like a raven, there. To him a sob lies lurking in every laugh; and his weary eyes can never look upon a dimple—a dimple, smile-wrought in damask cheek—but they see therein the sheen of coming tears.

28.

Here I am, then, Whacker-Danichester-Bouche. [Anglicé, Bush.] And, since man is but the epitome of his ancestry, what kind of an author should result? Chemists tell us that it is not so much the molecules as their arrangement. Let us try this: Danichester-Bush-Whacker,—so what else could I be but a

Humoristico-sentimental Bushwhacker?

And such I am, ladies and gentlemen, at your service!

29.

And a Bushwhacker, beloved scion, you will rightly divine to be one who whacks from behind a bush. But

that this is so is (and *that* you would never guess) one of those whimsical accidents of which philology points out so many examples. Bushwhackers no more got their name in the way the name suggests than your Shank-high fowls got theirs from length of limb.

How they did get it I must now explain. Not that I may vaingloriously show off my rather quaint and curious philologic lore. I have a better motive. The word has its origin in an incident in our family history; an incident, too, of such interest that it gave rise to a poem, famous in its day, beginning, "All quiet along the Potomac to-night,"—the author of which will never be known. For three hundred and eleven people (two hundred and ninety-nine women and twelve men) went before justices of the peace, when it began to make a noise in the world, and made oath that they wrote it. Which shows, among other things, that there is no lack of justices of the peace in this country. But let's to the incident.

30.

You must know, then, that the Bouche connection is as numerous as it is respectable. Hardly a county in Virginia where you shall not find a colony of them. And as a rule they are genteel folk, mingling with the best. But (for I shall not conceal it from you) every now and then one stumbles upon a shoot of the original stem that is fallen into the sere and yellow leaf. Still, the motto with us is, that a Bouche is a Bouche, even though he be run down at the heel. But our clannishness has its limits. We draw the line at the spelling of the name,—draw it sharply between Bouche and Bush. Still, I happen to have heard my grandfather say that, though old Jim Bush did not spell the name after the aristocratic Huguenot fashion, his father before him did; and that, consequently, he was one of us.

After all, he was by no means a bad fellow. It covers his case better to say that he was not profitable unto himself. He was, in fact, a kind of Rip Van Winkle, whose hands, though he was desperately poor and

owned a farm of a few acres, were more familiar with the rifle than the handles of a plough. For miles around his tumble-down old house he and his gun were a terror to game of all kinds; and it was believed that, of squirrels especially, he had killed more, in his day, than any man within miles of Alexandria. Nor were there lacking those who maintained that upon a dozen of these edible rodents, as a substratum, he could build up a Brunswick stew such as—but I dined with him once, and feel no need of outside testimony. (I suppose it was the French streak in him. He spelt himself Bush, but blood will tell.)

“The main secret, Jack” (everybody calls me Jack, no matter how poor and humble they may be; besides, he *was* a cousin),—“the main secret is that I put in the brains. When I was a green hand with the rifle I used to knock their heads off; and monstrous proud I was, I remember, of never touching their bodies. Now I save their brains by just wiping off their smellers.”

Yes, my son, he was an out-at-the-elbows Bouche, and his language was low. But let us not sneer at him. He could do two things well. And how many of us can do one! For my own part, when I look at myself and then at my brother-men, I cannot find it in my heart to despise the lowliest of them all. The scornful alone do I scorn. And when I see a little two-legged puff-ball strutting along, with its nose in the air, I long for old Jim Bush and his rifle, that he might serve it as he did the squirrels.

31.

Old Jim's ramshackle house stood in the zone which lay between the Northern and Southern armies during the winter following the first battle of Manassas, or Bull Run. He was not young enough to shoulder his musket, having been born in the year 1800. Besides, rheumatism had laid its heavy hand upon his left knee. As scouting parties of the enemy frequently came uncomfortably near old Jim's little farm, he, dreading capture, spent most of his time in the dense woods which surrounded his house, creeping back, at nightfall,

beneath its friendly roof. True, the roof leaked here and there, but it was all he had, and he loved it.

One day the enemy pushed forward their picket-line as far as his house, and established a station there. It was late in the afternoon when they came, and old Jim, who had already returned for the night, had barely time, on hearing the clatter of hoofs at his very door, to rush out by the back way and tumble into the dense jungle of a ravine which skirted his little garden. Very naturally, to a Bedouin like old Bush, the idea of being immured in a noisome dungeon, as had happened to some of his less wily neighbors, was full of horrors; and crawling into the densest part of the thicket, he crouched there pale and hardly breathing, lest the men whose voices he heard so clearly should hear him.

Old Joe—for, while Jim differed from Diogenes in many other ways, he was like him in this, that he owned a solitary slave—old Joe they had caught. No doubt the sizzling (the dictionary-man will please put the word in his next edition)—the sizzling of the bacon in his frying-pan dulled his bearing; and so his knees smote together, when, raising his eyes to the darkened door, he saw a Federal soldier standing upon the threshold.

"Sarvant, mahster!" stammered he through his chattering teeth.

In order to explain his terror to readers of the present day, I must beg them to recall the fact that Lincoln had issued a proclamation that the North had no intention or wish to overthrow slavery in the South. "We come to save the Union,—dash the niggers!" was the angry and universal reply of the Federal soldiers when our women jeered them on their supposed mission. Hence the phrase "wicked and *causeless* rebellion," without which no loyal editor could get on with the least comfort in those early days of the war.

Just as a poetess, nowadays, rends her ringlets till she finds a way of working "gloaming" into her little sonnet.

The abolitionists,—to praise them is the toughest task my conscience ever put upon me,—though they brought

on the war, were not war-men. They honestly abhorred slavery, and had the courage of their convictions. They would have let the "erring sisters depart in peace" so as to rid the Union of the blot of African servitude, and deserve such honor as is due to earnest men. Later on, they changed their position; but middle-aged men will remember what their views were at the opening of the struggle.

Not recognizing, therefore, a friend in the "Yankee" who stood in his door-way, the glitter of his bayonet was disagreeable to old Joe's eyes, and the point of it looked so sharp that it made his ribs ache; and his knees trembled beneath him. For old Joe was not by nature bloodthirsty, nor longed for gore,—least of all the intimate and personal gore of Joseph Meekins.

"Sarvant, mahster!"

Perhaps old Jim's naturally serene temper was ruffled, at the moment, by the fact that the fangs of a blackberry-bush, under which he had forced his head, had fastened themselves upon his right ear. At any rate, I am afraid he muttered, *sotto voce*, an oath at hearing his old slave and friend call a Yankee master.

"Sarvant, mahster!"

Old Joe's form was bent low, his teeth chattered, his eyes rolled in terror like those of a bullock dragged up to the slaughter-post and the knife.

The sight of a man's face distorted with abject fear has always filled me with deep compassion; but I believe it arouses in the average man (which I am far from claiming to be) a feeling of pitiless scorn.

"Sarvant, mahster!" chattered old Joe, writhing himself behind the kitchen table. The soldier was an average man.

"Where is your master, you d—d old baboon?" said he, entering the kitchen.

"My mahster, yes, mahster, my mahster, he—for de love o' Gaud, young gent'mun, don't pint her dis way,—she mought be loaded. Take a cheer, young mahster; jess set up to de table" (over which he gave a rapid pass with his sleeve) "an' lemme gi' you some o' dat nice bacon I was jess a-fryin' for my mahster's supper."

At these words old Jim's teeth began to chatter so that he forgot the belligerent brier.

The soldier, hungry from his march, fell to, nothing loath, but had scarcely eaten three mouthfuls before several of his comrades appeared, all of whom fell foul of poor old Jim's supper with military ardor, if without military precision.

"Where's the old F. F. V.?" asked a new-comer, through a mouthful of hoe-cake.

"Yes, where is your master?" put in the first man. "You didn't tell me. Out with it."

Joe had had time to repent of his ill-advised admission in regard to the supper.

"You ax me whar Mr. Bush is? Oh, he's in Culpeper Court-House. Leastways, he leff b'fo' light dis mornin' boun' dar."

The audacious lack of adjustment between this statement and the facts of the case amazed, almost amused, old Jim. Breathing a little freer, he ventured softly to shake his ear loose from the brier; for he could not reach it with his hand.

"Why, you lying old ape, didn't you tell me that this was his supper?"

"Cert'n'y, young gent'mun; cert'n'y I say dat, in course."

"And your master at Culpeper?"

"Yes, young mahster. Dis is de way 'tis. You 'pear like a stranger in dese parts, beggin' your pardon, an' maybe you mout'n' understan' how de folks 'bout here is. S'posin' some o' de neighbors had 'a' step in, and dar warn't nothin' for 'em to eat, an' mahster hear 'bout it when he come back, how I turn a gent'mun hongry 'way fum de do'. How 'bout dat, you reckon? Umgh-umgh! You don't know my mahster! Didn't I try it once! Lord 'a' mussy!"

"How was it?"

"You ax me how was it! Go 'long, chile!" (No musket had gone off yet, and Joe began to feel rather more comfortable.) "Go 'long! My mahster was off fox-huntin' wid some o' de bloods,—some o' de bloods,—an' when he come back an' find out I hadn't cook no

supper jess 'cause he was away, an' I done turn a gent'-mun off widout he supper, mahster he gimme, eff you b'lieve Joe, he gimme 'bout de keenest breshin' Joe ever tase in he born days." And, throwing back his head, he gave a laugh such as these soldiers had never heard in their lives.

And none of us shall ever hear again.

As for old Jim, who had never laid the weight of his finger on the romancer whose imagination was now playing like a fountain, tears of affectionate gratitude came into his eyes.

An instant later, and all kindly feeling was curdled in his simple heart.

Hearing a bustle, he peeped through the briers, and saw the officer in command of the party coming towards the kitchen, bearing in his hand the Virginia flag. He had discovered it in old Jim's bedroom, where he had tacked it upon the bare wall, so that it was the last thing he saw at night and the first his opening eyes beheld. It was an insult to the Union soldiers, he heard the officer say, to flaunt the old rag in their faces. It was what no patriot could stand. He would teach the dashed rebels a lesson. "Set fire to this house," he ordered. "The old rattletrap would fall down anyway, the first high wind that came along," he added, with a laugh.

That laugh had a keener sting for old Jim than the order to burn down the house which had sheltered him for sixty years. The bitterest thing about poverty, says Juvenal, is that it makes men ridiculous.

Late in the night, when the smoking ruins of his house no longer gave any light, Jim crawled stealthily down the ravine. Could the sentry, as he marched back and forth on his beat, have seen the look that the old man, turning, fixed upon him every now and then as he made his way through the jungle, he would have felt less comfortable. As for Jim, half dead with cold, he reached the fires of the Confederate pickets at day-break. On his way he had stopped at a certain old oak, and, thrusting down his arm into its hollow trunk, drew forth his rifle.

"Bushy-tails," said he, with grave passion, waving his hand in the direction of the tree-tops above him, "you needn't mind old Jim any longer. Lead is skeerce these times. You may skip 'round and chatter all you want to. Your smellers is safe. And gobblers, you may gobble and strut in peace now. You needn't say put! put! when you see me creepin' 'round. I won't be a-lookin' for you. You'll have to excuse the old man. Bullets is skeerce these days, let alone powder. So, good-by, my honeys. And if you will forgive me the harm I *have* done you, old Jim won't trouble you any more."

And so, with his rifle across his lap, he sat upon a log and warmed his benumbed limbs, and, looking into friendly faces, warmed his heart, too.

"I say, old man," said a young soldier, chaffing him, "what do you call that thing lying in your lap? Can it shoot?"

"I call her Old Betsey," said he. "You may laugh at her, but if you hold her right and steady, she hurts. There ain't anything funny about Old Betsey's business end, I promise you." And he tapped the muzzle of his rifle with a grim smile.

Late in the afternoon of the next day (it took him all this day to get thawed) old Jim bade the jolly boys at the picket station good-day. He was going scouting, he said.

"Leave the old pop-gun behind," cried one.

"No, take it along," put in another. "Perhaps you may knock over a molly-cotton-tail. Fetch her in, and we will help you cook her."

32.

Just before sundown the old man reached the summit of a densely-wooded little hill, about three hundred yards from where his house had lately stood. Stopping in front of a tall hickory on its apex, he raised his eyes and surveyed the tree from bottom to top.

"I went up it once, after nuts," said he, speaking aloud; "but that was many a year ago,—let me see,—yes, forty-five years. Well, I must try—ah, I see,—I

can make it." And, leaning Old Betsey against the huge trunk, he tackled a young white oak.

Old Jim was tough and wiry, and found no great difficulty in climbing this to a point about thirty feet from the ground, where a large branch of the hickory came within a foot of the white oak. This he cooned till he reached the trunk. [I have not time to define cooning. Suffice it to say that, like heat, it is a mode of motion.] Toiling up this till he reached a fork about eighty feet from the ground, he, with a sharp effort, adjusted his own bifurcation to that of the tree, and immediately, without taking time to collect his breath, leaned forward, and fixed his eyes intently upon the little open space in front of the ruins of his house. He gazed, motionless, for a little while, then nodded his head,—“Ah, there he comes.” He sat there for half an hour, watching the sentry come into view and again pass out of sight, as he marched to and fro. “Well, old man,” said he, at last, “I reckon you know about all you want to know.” And twisting his stiff leg out of the fork, with a wry face, he descended the hickory, and took his seat upon a fallen trunk that lay near, throwing old Betsey across his lap. It was growing dark, and every now and then he raised his rifle to his cheek and took aim at various trees around him. Took aim again and again, lowering and raising his rifle, with contracted brows. “I am afraid my eyes are growing dim,” he muttered; “but the moon will rise at a quarter to ten, and then it will be all right, won’t it, old Bet? Don’t you remember that big gobbler we tumbled out of the beech-tree, one moonlight night—let me see—nineteen years ago coming next Christmas Eve? And you ain’t going to go back on me to-night, are you? Oh, I know you will stand by me this one time, if my eyes are just a little old and dim. I know you will help me out, as you have done many a time before, when I didn’t point you just right, but you knew where I wanted the bullet to go. Do you know what’s happened, old gal? Do you know that the little corner behind the bed, where you have stood for fifty years, is all ashes now, and the bed, too? Do you hear me,

Betsey? And as the Holy Scripture says, the birds of the air have their nests, and the foxes their holes, but you and I have not where to lay our heads."

The old man bowed his head over his rifle; and the fading twilight revealed the cold, steady gleam of its polished barrel, spotted with the quivering shimmer of hot tears.

33.

A soldier marched to and fro in the darkness. It oppressed him, and he longed for the moon to rise.

Does the wisest among us know what to pray for?

Tramp! tramp! tramp! tramp! He pauses at one end of his beat and looks down upon his comrades sleeping, wrapped in their blankets, with their feet to the fire. When his hour is up, he, too, will sleep. Yes, and it is up, now, poor fellow, and your sleep will know no waking!

Yet it was not you who burned the nest of the poor old man. Nor even your regiment. Nor had *you* helped to hound the South to revolution by threats and contumely. 'Twas John Brown dissolved the Union. You hated him and his work, for you loved your whole country,—you and your father, who bade you good-by, the other day, with averted face. And now you must die that that work may be undone. You and half a million more of your people.

The South salutes your memory!

Ah, the moon is rising now. Ribbons of light stealing through the trees lie across his path, and yonder, at the farther end of it, the Queen of Night pours a flood of soft effulgence through a rift in the wood. The young soldier stood in the midst of it, bathed in a glorious plenitude of peaceful light. Such perfect stillness! Can this be war, thought he? He could hear the ticking of his watch upon his heart. But the click! click! beneath that dark old oak,—that he did not hear. And that barrel that glitters grimly even in the shadow,—he sees it not. The tear-stains are upon it still; but the tears are dried and gone.

Click! click!

The muzzle rises slowly; butt and shoulder meet. A

head bends low ; a left eye closes ; the right, brown as a hawk's and as fierce, glares, from beneath corrugated brow, along a barrel that rests as though in a grip of steel. The keen report of a sporting rifle—not loud, but crisp and clear—rings through the silent wood, and there is a heavy fall and a groan.

And the placid moon, serene mocker of mortals and their woes, floated upward and upward, and on and on. On and on, supremely tranquil, over other scenes, whether of love or hate.

Ah, can it be true that we poor men have no friend anywhere in the heavens above, as some would have us believe? or the ever-peaceful gods, dwellers upon Olympus, have they in very deed forgotten us?

34.

"Where's your game, grandpa?" asked the young soldier. "We have been sitting up waiting for you and your rabbit."

"There are two kinds of game," replied the old man, warming his hands before the fire ; "one sort you bring home, the other kind you send home."

"What! did you shoot a Yankee? One of the boys thought he heard the crack of a rifle."

"'Twas old Betsey," replied he, patting her cheek, as it were. "We whacked one of 'em. *He* won't set fire to any more houses, I reckon."

After this, old Jim, thoroughly acquainted with the country for miles around, became a regular scout ; and going and coming at all hours of the night and day, he was soon well-known along the line of our outposts. And whenever he had important information to give, he went straight to headquarters ; but whenever, after a moonlight night, he stopped at the picket-post, sat down on a log and toyed with his rifle, seeming to have nothing to say, the boys knew that he was waiting for a certain question: "Yes, old Betsey and me whacked one of 'em last night." And then he would set out for headquarters, and the soldiers, passing the news, and adopting old Jim's word, would say, "Old Bush whacked another of the rascals last night." And these

two words, so often brought in contact, at last cohered. Bushwhacker did not, therefore, originally, at least, mean a man who whacked from behind a thicket, but one who whacked after the fashion of old Jim Bush.

35.

And I am a Bushwhacker who whacketh after that fashion. So much so, that it seems to me that my parents made a sort of prophetic pun when they named me John Bouche. The difference between me and old Jim is simply this: that he expressed his sentiments with a carnal rifle, I mine with a spiritual one. He hung upon the skirts of the Northern hosts; I go stalking stragglers from the Noble Army of Lies. Every sham the sturdy Whacker molecules of me impel my soul to hate. Yet my Huguenot blood shrinks from martyrdom. Did not *they* leave France to avoid it? I never attack the main body. But let a feeble, emaciated, and worn-out little lie, or a blustering, braggart fraud, or a conceited, coxcombical sham, stray to the right or left, or get belated on the march! I pounce upon him like an owl upon a field-mouse. It is my nature to. And so the reader must not be surprised, as we journey along together, through scene after scene of my story, to find herself suddenly left alone at the most unexpected times and places. I'll come back, after a while, bringing a scalp; after which we will jog along together, for a chapter or so, again.

And a jolly, rousing, mad time we shall have of it, then. For it is on such occasions that I put my mustang through his comical paces,—my coal-black mustang, with his great, shaggy mane, and bushy, flowing tail, that sweeps the ground. For though, as every school-boy knows, a Poet or other Gifted Person is properly mounted only on a Pegasus, I have been unable to get me one of those winged, high-bounding steeds.

36.

And now, fair lady, the manager makes his bow and exit. You will soon be in better company.

One word more,—he begs your pardon. He led you

to believe that the opera began at eight, sharp. You were there, in your seat, on time, eager to hear the first notes of the opening chorus. But I feared that had you known there was to be a long overture you would have been late, and thereby missed certain *leit-motifs*, not to have heard which would have marred what was to follow. Honestly, now, had you known that Chapter I. was not Chapter I., nor chapter of any kind, would you have read it? Would you not have skipped it, clear and clean (for it's a hundred to one that you are a woman), had you known that it was my Introduction?

Al

Flauti.



Oboi.



Clarineti
in B.



Fagotti.



Corno I. u. II.
in Es.



Corno III.
in Es.



Trombe
in Es.



Timpani
in Es. B.



Violino I.



Violino II.

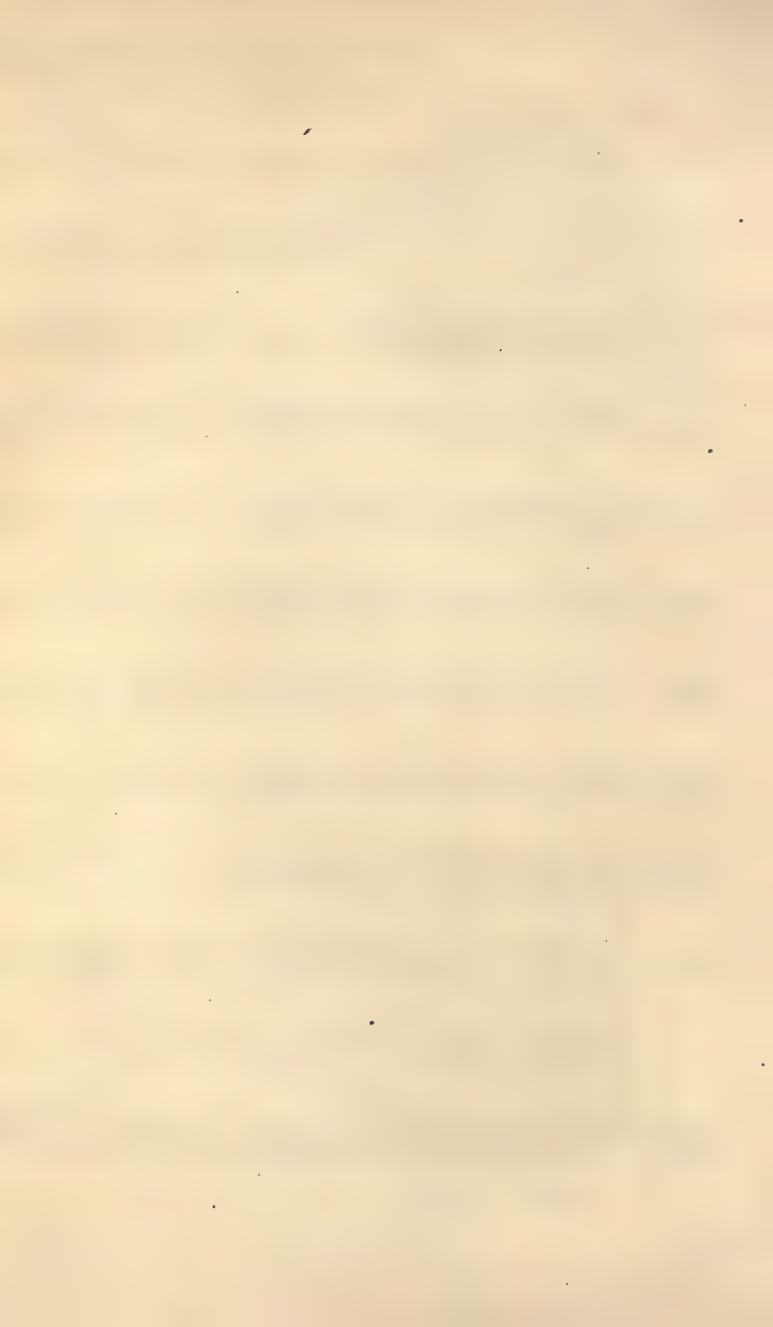


Viola.



Violoncello e
Contrabasso.





SYMPHONY OF LIFE.

MOVEMENT I.

ALLEGRO CON BRIO.

CHAPTER II.

As the last rays of the setting sun were gilding the modest spires of Richmond, early in the month of October, 1860, I was sitting with two young ladies at the front parlor window of a house on Leigh Street. One of these, Lucy Poythress, like myself, was from the county of Leicester;* or, to speak with entire exactness, her father's residence was separated from my grandfather's, in that county, by a river only. She had arrived in Richmond that morning, on a visit to her friend, Alice Carter. As the two girls, lately school-mates, had not met for three months, and had just risen from an excellent dinner,—that notable promoter of the affections,—I deem it superfluous to state that they were holding each other's hands.

Also, they were talking.

"Oh, Lucy!" exclaimed Alice, suddenly starting up, "I had forgotten to tell you. I have fallen in love,—that is, *nearly*. I must tell you about it," continued she, talking, at the same time, with her lips, her hands, and her merry-glancing hazel eyes,—“it was so romantic!”

"Of course," said I.

"Ah, don't be jealous!" retorted she, coaxingly. "But you see, Lucy, one day last week, as I was crossing the street, two squares below here, I struck my

* There is no such county in Virginia: for Leicester read Gloucester.
—Ed.

foot against something and fell flat. A book that I carried tumbled one way, my veil flew another, and—”

“And some pale, poetic stranger helped you to rise,” interrupted I.

“Yes; a gentleman who was meeting me just as I fell, and whose face I am sure I had never before seen in Richmond, ran forward, lifted me up, got me my book and veil, and, in short, he was so graceful, and his voice was so gentle, when he said ‘Excuse me,’ as he lifted me from the ground, that—I confess—I—” And dropping her eyes, and with an inimitable simper on her countenance, she made as though straightening, between thumb and forefinger, the hem of her handkerchief.

“Ah, you are the same dear old Alice still,” cried Lucy, leaning forward, and, with laughing lips, kissing her on the cheek. “And you fell in love with the graceful stranger?”

“Yes, indeed,—that is, as much as was becoming in a young woman of eighteen summers. By the way, Lucy, you too have reached that dignified age since I last saw you. Don’t you begin to feel ancient? I do. We shall soon be old maids.”

“And the romantic stranger, in that event?” asked I. “He, I suppose, will go hurl himself dismally off Mayo’s bridge. By the way, yonder he comes now.”

I am aware that the barest insinuation of the kind is flouted and scouted by the lovelier portion of mankind; but among men it is always frankly admitted that women are not destitute of curiosity.

“Yonder he comes now,” said I, languidly, as one who had dined well. Two lovely heads shot instantly out of the window.

“Where? where?”

“There,” said I; “that tall chap with the heavy beard, on the other side of the street.”

“Well, upon my word,” cried Alice, “’tis the very man! How on earth did you know it was he? You didn’t? Really and truly? How strange! Oh, if he would only cross the street and walk past our window! There, I believe—no—yes, here he comes across! How

nice! What on earth makes him carry his hat in his hand?"

"Is that really your graceful friend?" asked I, growing interested.

"It is certainly he; I am sure I am not mistaken."

The Unknown was crossing the street in a very leisurely, or rather abstracted, manner, evidently absorbed in thought,—or the lack of it,—for extremes meet. With hat in hand and chin pressed upon his breast, he sauntered along with the air of one who is going nowhere, and cares not when he reaches his destination. When he reached the lamp-post at the corner, not over twenty or thirty yards from where we stood, he stopped, hung his hat on the back of his head, and drew from his breast-pocket a pencil and a piece of stiff-looking paper. This he held against the lamp-post, and appeared to write or draw.

We drew back a little from the window.

"What on earth is he going to do?" exclaimed Alice.

"He is doubtless inditing an ode," said I, "in commemoration of last week's romantic interview. 'Lines to a fallen angel,' perhaps." This witticism passed unheeded.

"The man's crazy!" said Alice.

The Unknown had thrown his head back, and, with his eyes nearly closed, was gently tapping the air with the pencil in a kind of rhythm.

"Did you ever!" ejaculated Alice.

"Did you ever!" echoed Lucy.

"Well, I never!" mocked I.

"St!"

We drew still farther away from the window. He was going to pass us. Pencil and paper are again in breast-pocket, hat in hand, chin upon breast.

"Isn't he nice and tall!"

"Yes; and what shoulders!"

"How strong he looks; and without an ounce of superfluous flesh!"

"How distinguished-looking!"

So chirruped these twain,—I, meanwhile, interject-

ing such interruptions as I could think of. "No one ever says of *me* that I haven't an ounce of superfluous flesh."

"Nor ever will, unless you go as a missionary among the Feejeeans," retorted Alice.

You see I am rather—but no matter about me.

At the edge of the sidewalk, and nearly opposite the window at which we were standing, was an oblong carriage-block of granite, and upon this was seated, at this juncture, a sister of Lucy's,—a little girl of nearly four years of age, playing with a set of painted squares of wood, known in the nursery as "blocks," which had been presented to her by her godmother, Mrs. Carter, at whose special request the little thing had been brought to Richmond. Her country nurse was standing a few paces distant, dressed out in her finest, airing her best country manners for the bedazzlement of a city beau of her acquaintance (as having been formerly of her county), a mulatto barber who had chanced to pass that way, and had stopped for a chat about old times. The Unknown had not observed the little girl till, in his listless way, he had sauntered to within a few feet of her, when, catching sight of the mass of sunny curls that poured over her neck and shoulders (her back was turned towards him), he stopped, and seeing what her occupation was and hearing the babbling of her little tongue as she agreed with herself, now upon this plan, now on that, upsetting one structure almost before it was begun for another which was to share a like fate; gazing upon this little scene, a look of pleased interest, not unmingled with sadness, came into his face.

"He is a married man," said I.

"Say not so!" cried Alice, with a tragic air.

"But his wife's dead," I added.

"I breathe again!" intoned Alice, in the same vein.

"Oh, *Alice!*" said Lucy, with gentle reproachfulness.

"Why, of course, Lucy," began Alice, throwing herself into an argumentative attitude, "of course I do not really rejoice at the poor woman's death; but how can you expect me to grieve over a person I never—"

"You are a greater scamp than ever," said Lucy, laughingly stopping her friend's mouth with her hand.

The little architect felt that some one stood behind her, and, turning her head and judging with that unerring infantile instinct that he was a friend, she gave him a number of those irresistible little looks, with which every one is familiar, half coy, half coquettish, which showed that, young though she was, her name was woman. Ladies at her time of life do not appreciate the necessity of introductions as preliminary to conversation with gentlemen.

"Build me a house!" cried she to the stranger, running towards him and looking now into his face, now at her blocks, with a smile half expectation, half timidity.

"I build you a house? Why, certainly, little brown eyes!"—taking her plump cheeks between his hands and gazing down into her upturned face with a smile that was singularly tender and bright; and all the more striking, as it gleamed forth with something of the suddenness of a flash of sunlight bursting through a cloud. It had been easy to see, indeed, as he approached us more nearly, that his preoccupations were not of a pleasant character. His slightly compressed lips imparted a shade of grimness to his look, and the mingled expression of weariness and resolution upon his features seemed to reveal some struggle going on in his breast.

"Well, now," said he, taking up a few of the blocks as he seated himself upon the stepping-stone, "what kind of a house shall we build?"

"Did you ever!" looked we, all of us!

"We-e'll, we-e'll—we'll m-a-k-e—let me tell you—"

"Saint Paul's Church?" suggested the stranger,—
"with a great, tall steeple!"

"N-o-o-o! People don't live in churches! M-a-k-e me—m-a-k-e me—oh! make me one just like our house!" cried she, with sudden triumph, placing her hand upon her new-found friend's shoulder, thrusting her face almost against his, and opening wide at him her great brown eyes, as much as to say, Now we

have it! And away she skipped, backwards, on the tips of her toes, clapping her dimpled hands; chirping forth, meanwhile, sundry joyous, inarticulate notes; which I shall not merely say were as sweet as the song of the birds,—for they were warblings from the heart of a happy child,—which notes, I take it, are the loveliest that float upward into the dome of the high heavens,—and blessed whose fingers avail to call them forth!

“Well, then,” began he, gathering together his blocks, “here are our bricks.”

“*Bricks!*” cried she, in a voice that was almost shrill with surprise. “Why, it is not a brick house!”

“Why, yes,” said he, carelessly glancing towards the house in which we were.

“Lor’ me, *that’s* not *our* house! Did you think that was our house? Oh, how funny!” cried she, gleefully triumphing in her superior knowledge; then, running towards the open window, behind the curtains of which the amused spectators of this scene had retired, “Sister Lucy!” exclaimed she, “what do you think! This gentleman thought this was our house, and we are just on a visit here! Sister Lucy! Sister *Lucy!* Sister L-u-u-u-c-y!”

Not receiving any reply from that alarmed young person, who had fled with me into one corner of the room, and with appalled look and appealing gestures was endeavoring to check the convulsive tittering of her friend Alice, who, in another corner, stood bowed together, weak and weeping with suppressed laughter, the little girl turned to her friend and said, “Sister Lucy has gone up-stairs, I reckon.”

“Thither Luthy hath dawn up-thtairs, I weckon,”—that was the way she said it; but words so distorted, charm, as they may, when they fall, like crumpled rose-leaves, from the fair portals of a child’s mouth, can please the eye of a phonetic reformer only. And so with the reader’s consent,—in fact, as a compliment to her,—I shall leave, in the main, such transformations to her fancy.

Besides, how utterly unintelligible would be a dia-

logue, so printed, to the very person for whose benefit, chiefly, this work has been undertaken. In his illumined day, you know, infants will have ceased to lisp.

The stranger had risen from his seat with rather a startled look, but upon this reassuring suggestion of his little friend, resumed it.

"You love your sister Lucy ever so much, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. Mr. Whacker does, too."

This remark produced a profound sensation upon two, certainly, of the eavesdroppers. Lucy, who was diffidence itself, blushed to the roots of her hair; while an uncomfortable consciousness of looking foolish took possession of me. Alice, holding her sides, fell exhausted upon a sofa.

"Mr. who?" asked he, with a sudden look of interest which startled us all.

"Mr. Whacker; don't you know Mr. Whacker?"

"Maybe so; what kind of a man is he?"

"Oh, he is a nice man, and he is so funny,—he makes me nearly dead with laughing."

"Does your sister Lucy love this nice, funny Mr. Whacker?"

Lucy looked perfectly aghast.

"Yes, she do."

"She do, do she?" echoed the Unknown; while ripples of merriment danced about his singularly intense and glowing eyes, like those on the dark waters of some deep lake.

"Did she ever tell you so?"

"Y-e-e-e-es," replied she, doubtfully.

"Mr. Whacker, I assure you," began Lucy, choking with mortification, "I—"

"I forgive, though I can never forget—"

"But—"

"St!" whispered Alice; "it is as good as a play!"

"But, Alice, it's a most outrageous—"

"Never mind,—listen!"

Meantime, we had lost a few sentences of the colloquy, which seemed to be affording intense amusement to the Stranger.

"But what did she say?" were the first words we caught.

"She said," began the little thing, gesticulating with her hands and rolling her eyes,—speaking, in fact, with her whole body,—“sister Lucy, she said—”

“Well.”

“Sister Lucy, she said Mr. Whacker was mighty fat, but he was right pretty.”

Imagine the scene behind the curtains! The trouble was that Lucy, who was as truthful as Epaminondas, could not deny having paid me, in substance, this two-edged compliment. So she could only bury her face in her hands. As for the Stranger, he actually laughed aloud.

“But do ladies always love pretty men?”

“Why, yes; I love my sweetheart, and he is pretty.”

“Your sweetheart! Have you a sweetheart?”

“Yes,” replied she, with decision and complacency.

“What’s his name?”

“I can’t tell you!”

“Do, now.”

“Oh, I *can’t*!” And she dropped her cheek on her off shoulder and shut her eyes.

“Say, do you like candy?”

“Yes,” said she, eagerly wheeling round; “where is it?”

“Never mind. If you will tell me, I will bring you some to-morrow.”

“What’s in that paper? I ‘spec’ it’s candy, right now!”

“No,” said he, smiling; “but I will bring you some to-morrow if you will tell me.”

She stuck a finger into her mouth and hung her head.

“Red candy,” began he, “and blue candy,” he continued, nodding his head up and down, between the varieties, with a sort of pantomimic punctuation, “and green candy—”

Wide-eyed delight and a half-smile of eager expectation illumined the face of the little tempted one.

“And yellow candy, and—let me see—and striped

candy, and speckled candy—and—and—and—ALL SORTS OF CANDY!"

She clasped her hands and drew a long breath.

"Will you?"

The infant that hesitates is lost.

"And tied up in most *beautiful* paper—"

"You won't tell Mr. Whacker?"

"No, never!!!"

In an instant the little creature had sprung towards him, seized his head, pulled it down, pressed her lips against his ear, shot the momentous name therein and bounded back.

"There! Give me the candy!"

"I said I should get it to-morrow. But I didn't hear a word. Tell me over again. There,—whisper it in my ear. Willie? Willie what?" said he, drawing her towards him. "Ah, that is the name, is it?"

We did not hear the name, and I must suppose it was that of some near neighbor of her father's.

"Now, don't tell Mr. Whacker!"

"No," replied the stranger; but he had heard her with the outward ear only. He sat, with drawn lids, gazing upon the pavement, and softly biting his nails, as though solving some problem. His lips seemed to move; and every now and then he looked, out of the corners of his eyes, at his little companion. At last he slowly rose, but stood motionless, with eyes fixed upon the ground.

"Oh, don't go!" cried she, her fair, upturned face wearing a beautiful expression of infantile affection.

And here our mysterious friend had another surprise in store for us. For, when he saw that look, a startled expression came into his face; and leaning forward, he scrutinized her features with a gaze so searching that there was a kind of glare in his eyes,—so that the little girl dropped her eyes and drew back, as though with a feeling of dread. But the Unknown suddenly sat down beside her, and, taking one of her hands in both his, patted it softly, and, in a voice tender as that of a young mother, asked, "But what is *your* name, my little cherub?"

"My name is Laura. Let's make another house—oh, no, let's make a boat!"

"Not now. But Laura what? What is your other name?"

"My name is Laura Poythress."

"Laura Poythress!"

He bowed his broad shoulders till his face was almost on a level with hers, and scanning her features intently: "Laura Poythress, Laura Poythress," repeated he, to himself; "and Lucy, too! and Whacker!"

We looked at each other with wide eyes.

Again the stranger rose; this time with nervous abruptness, and took a few rapid turns up and down the pavement, close to little Laura; then walking quickly up to her, and stooping down, he asked her, in an eager whisper, "Have you any mother?"

"Yeth," replied she, with a simple little laugh, "of courth; evvybody'th dot a muvver!"

He seemed to avert his face when she laid down this generalization; nor could we, from our position, see his expression. "Yes," said he; and was silent for a while.

"What is your mother's name?"

"My mother's name is Mumma."

"But what is her real sure-enough name?"

"Her name is Mumma," repeated she, with emphasis.

"Oh, my mother's got two names. She is named Mumma and she is named Mrs. Poythress."

"Ah, yes; but what does your father call her?"

"My papa calls my mumma my dear; oh, and sometimes he calls her 'honey,'—because she is so sweet."

"Does he ever call her—let me see—does he ever call her Polly?"

"Oh, me, the idea!" cried she, raising her hands and eyes in infantile pity of his ignorance. "Why, that's Aunt Polly's name!"

"So your Aunt Polly is named Polly, is she?"

"No, she ain't! Aunt Polly is named *Aunt* Polly. She is our cook at our house, she is."

"She is your cook, is she? And what does she call your mother?"

"Mistiss."

Just then the mulatto barber, passing by, doffed his hat to the gentleman; and Dolly, the nurse, left alone, bethought her of her charge. Coming up, she dropped a courtesy to the Stranger, and told Laura it was time she were within doors.

"Good-by, Laura," said the Unknown, taking her plump little hand in his; "won't you give me a kiss? Ah, that's a good little girl! One more! And another! Ah!" And he patted her cheek. "Good-by!"

"Dood-by!"

CHAPTER III.

WE looked at each other, and, although two-thirds of us were girls, several seconds passed without a word being spoken.

"Oh, here comes Mary!" And, looking across the way, I saw Mary Rolfe briskly tripping down the steps of her father's residence. Away scampered Alice and Lucy into the hall; not to unlock the front door for Mary, for that, Richmond-fashion, stood wide open; but impelled by that instinctive conviction, never entirely absent from the female breast, that life is short. I followed with all the dignity of a fledgling counsellor-at-law, and possible future supreme justice.

The three met on the sidewalk and it began,—*Eurus, Zephyrusque Notusque*.

All nature is one. Remove the plug from a basin and see how the water, instead of pouring straight out in a business-like way, spins round and round, just as though it knew you were late for breakfast. Behold, too, the planets in their courses. And as in a tornado, which whirls along through field and forest, across mountain-chain and valley, around its advancing storm-centre, so in one of those lesser atmospheric disturbances set up by the conversation, or rather *contemporaneousversation*, of three or four girls just met (impossible though it be, in the present state of our knowledge, to determine in advance the precise location of

their area of lowest barometric pressure), it is clear, even to the eye, that the movement of the girls themselves is cyclonic. And, further, just as, in a storm, the area of highest barometer is found to be occupied by a more or less tranquil atmosphere, so you shall find that the centre of a contemporaneous conversation always moves forward around a listener,—some weakling of a girl, with a bronchitis, perhaps, or, in rare cases, a stammerer. And again, just as a body of air, itself capable of levelling houses and uprooting trees, may be forced into quiescence by its environment of storm, so may a really worthy girl, not otherwise inferior, be reduced to silence by despair.

This, in fact, was the case with Lucy in the present instance. As the lovely human cyclone, whose outward sign was a world of fluttering ribbons and waving flounces, came whirling up the steps, through the hall, and into the parlor, it was obvious that she was the pivot around which it revolved.

In plain English, she found it impossible to get in a word.

It appears that Mary had seen, from her window, the Unknown, and watched his strange performances till he was gone. She had not seen us at our window, and tripping across the street to tell her dear Alice what a singular man she had seen sitting on her carriage-block, and talking with Laura, she had found that Alice had seen and heard more than she. And so, with that instinctive dread of loss of time so characteristic of the sex, they both, when they met on the sidewalk, began talking at once. They began talking to each other; but soon, their words, in obedience to that law of which Mr. Herbert Spencer makes so much (that moving bodies always follow the line of least resistance), began flowing into Lucy's ears. Not that Mary took possession of one ear, Alice of the other. Rather did they, in obedience to law, revolve around her, as the earth around the sun, the moon round the earth, water round its exit, pouring their tidings into either organ with impartial eagerness.

It may excite wonder among my male readers that

Alice should have told Lucy things that she knew the latter had seen with her own eyes. But this would be hardly putting the case fairly, as her remarks were couched rather in the form of exclamatory comments than of pure narrative. The male reader, again (would that there were no such dull animals in the world!), must be warned not to suppose that Alice and Mary were rude in talking simultaneously. It is discourteous, oh, crass mortal, for one man to interrupt another; but where a party of girls are met together, it will be found that the words of each, though many, are no impediment, but a stimulus, rather, to those of the rest.

Like swallows at eventide, circling around some village chimney, the more of them in the air at once, the more merrily do they flit.

And it will be found, too, that no matter how many have been talking at once, each will have heard what all have said.

It is when I contemplate this well-known phenomenon that my wonder daily grows that no allusion has ever been made to this acknowledged superiority of the female over the male homo, by what are called the woman-women, in their annual pow-wows in the interest of their sex. Cropped-haired woman after cropped-haired woman will arise, reinforced, here and there, by some mild-eyed male, o'er whose sloping shoulders soft ringlets cluster, and the burden of the plaint of she-he and he-she, alike, will be *only* that woman is unjustly excluded by man from this employment or that privilege, for which she is as well fitted as he. They seem to me to forget that Hannibal was not overcome till Africa was invaded; and they will never advance their cause till they find some female Scipio to put man upon the defensive, and aggressively insist that the real question is not whether *she* is capable of becoming lawyer, physician, preacher, but whether *he* is, or, at any rate, will be, in the re-fashioned world which is coming, fit for any avocation whatever.

Let us take the legal profession for an example. Excluding the male lawyer of the period, as an interested witness, who can fail to see how much would be gained

were our judges, our counsel, and our jurymen all women? As things actually stand, the law's delay has passed into a proverb. But what delay could there be in a trial wherein all the witnesses could be examined simultaneously, without a word being lost on the jury; where the learned (and lovely) counsel could sum up side by side (like a pair of well-matched trotters), neither of them getting in the first word, neither (what fairness!) being allowed the last? Again. Instead of a drowsy Bench, hearing nothing, seeing nothing, you would have an alert Sofa, capable of lending one ear to the plaintiff's counsel, one to the defendant's; taking in, with one eye, every convolution of the jury's back-hair (should such things be), while with the other, she—the Court—estimated the relative good looks of the litigants, preparatory to instructing the jury and laying down the law. And so of the other professions, did space allow.

But this is not the worst of the matter. Already have advanced thinkers begun dimly to see that, with the approaching extinction of war, the time will come when courage will be worse than useless; while, in the rapid multiplication of labor-saving machinery, there is discernible the inevitable approach of an era when superior strength will be a disadvantage. For is not strength assimilated food? And in the Struggle for Existence will not She, requiring less food, and being therefore Fittest, survive? So that, with Seer's eye, I seem to behold the day when my sex, excluded from every avocation, shall perish from off the face of that earth over which we have so long and so haughtily lorded.

The truth is, my dear lad (would that you were a girl!), I shudder when I think of your fate and that of your brother males, three hundred years from now. Preserved here and there in the zoological gardens of the wealthy and the curious, along with rare specimens of the bison of the prairie, skeletons of the American Indian and the dodo; exhibited in mammoth moral shows, and meeting the stare of the unnumbered female of the period with a once wicked, but now,

alas! futile wink, you will rue the day when your ancestors, mistaking might for right, excluded woman from that haven of rest, the ballot-box. Why, it was but the other day that I saw a boy with a basketful of pups, which he was going to drown; and on my asking him why he condemned them to this fate, he answered, in the simplest way, "Oh, they are nothing but *she's*."

Yet we are never tired of boasting of our nineteenth century!

How the world is to be kept wagging when once the custom is established of drowning all the boy-babies (except specimens for menageries and preserves), is a problem for the science of the future. It suffices that I have recorded my views upon this burning question.

And upon this plank of my platform you, my grandson-to-the-tenth-power, will, I trust, be allowed to float by the womankind of your day, in remembrance of my gallant defence of their rights in mine. Yes, yes, you will be one of the elect and undrowned!

CHAPTER IV.

"OH!" cried Alice, springing up from the piano-stool. "But, Mary, I have not told you that he was the identical man who lifted me up the other day when I fell in the street."

"You don't tell me so!"

"Yes, indeed, the very man; and, strangest of all, he seemed to know something about us, or at least about Lucy and Mr. Whacker." And she related the strange doings and sayings of the Unknown just previous to the close of his interview with Laura.

"How very provoking," cried Mary, impatiently, "that I should have been prevented from dining with you girls by the arrival of that stupid old cousin William, as mother will persist in calling him, though, in

my opinion, he is about as nearly related to us as the man in the moon! Pshaw!" And she stamped her foot.

"Yes, indeed, I am too sorry. Why, Mary, it would have done"—and her irrepressible eyes began to twinkle—"for a scene in that novel which—"

"Now, Alice—" began Mary, reddening.

"Which I am thinking of writing," continued Alice, innocently. "Why, what's the matter?"

"Oh!"

"Is Mary writing a novel?" asked Lucy, with eager interest; for she remembered that she had been always regarded as the genius of the school.

"I spoke of the novel which *I* was writing," persisted Alice.

"Yes, but—"

"It is a maxim of the common law, Miss Lucy," remarked the learned counsel, with ponderous gravity, "that all shall be held innocent till proven guilty. But should novel-writing ever be made (as seems inevitable) a statutory offence, I hold it as probable that this ruling will be reversed, and the presumption of the law adjudged, in the present state of literature, to lie the other way,—in plain English, that the *onus probandi innocentiam* would be held to rest upon the prisoner at the bar."

The two other girls laughed, but Mary rewarded my diversion in her support with a grateful smile.

"To think I should have missed it!"

"Oh, I forgot to tell you. Come over and dine with us to-morrow, and you will have a chance of seeing him."

"How is that?" asked Mary, with dancing eyes.

"Why, he has promised to bring Laura some candy to-morrow evening, and we can all have another look at him."

"Oh, I wonder if he will come?" cried Mary, despondingly.

"I have no doubt of it, for he seems in some strange way as much interested in us as we in him. At any rate, you will dine with us. Mr. Whacker will of course do likewise."

The reader will please imagine the dinner in question over, the three young ladies eagerly watching, up and down the street, through the slats of the closed Venetian blinds, while Mrs. Carter and myself, too dignified to manifest our curiosity so clearly, held ourselves in the rear as a sort of reserve. Laura, our little decoy, was trotting, meanwhile, from room to room, singing and babbling; having, in fact, entirely forgotten the Stranger and his promise. It had been decided in a council of war not to remind her of it till our man was seen approaching, when she was to be sent out in a casual way to intercept him.

"Gracious, here he is!" exclaimed all three of the girls at once. "Where is Laura?"

"Laura! Laura! Laura!" cried Alice, in a suppressed voice. "Mother! Mr. Whacker! somebody bring Laura, please."

It appears that the Unknown, instead of making his approach by way of Leigh Street, as we somehow expected, had suddenly turned into that thoroughfare from the cross-street. The girls from their position commanded a view of this cross-street for some distance, looking towards the south, as the Carters' residence was but one remove from the corner. Strange to say, however, the gentleman emerged into Leigh Street from the north, as though returning from a walk in the country, and thus came upon the girls without warning. The reserves, forgetting their dignity, scampered off in their search for Laura. She, meanwhile, ignorant of her importance, was sitting in the back yard, building mounds upon a pile of sand that lay there, and before she could be found the stranger had passed. He turned and looked back several times, and when he reached the end of the block he stopped, and, turning, looked for some time in our direction. Meanwhile, I, having secured the little truant, was hurrying to the front, while Mrs. Carter, plump and jovial soul, was not far behind me.

"Make haste! make haste!" cried Alice, who, with Mary, had in her impatience found her way into the hall. "Make haste, or he will be gone. Come, Laura,

the gentleman with the candy is out there. There, quick!" she added, with a little push; and Laura trotted out with pleased alacrity.

"Too late!" sighed Lucy from behind the shutters, where she had been placed for purposes of safe observation. "Too late! he has moved on."

CHAPTER V.

THAT evening, as I bade the family good-night, after with some difficulty escaping from Mrs. Carter's urgent invitation to dine with them again next day, I agreed to call immediately after dinner, so as to be on hand should the Stranger, as we thought likely, return in search of Laura. Nor were we disappointed; and this time, warned by the failure of the preceding day, we had kept Laura well in hand; so that she was ready on the front steps as he was passing.

The two friends smiled as their eyes met.

"Where is it?" asked she, a sudden cloud of anxiety veiling her young face,—for, with those of her age, not seeing is not believing.

"Never mind!" said he, tapping his breast-pocket with a knowing air; and she hurried down the steps as best she could.

He unbuttoned his coat and slowly inserted his hand into his breast-pocket.

"Pull it out!" cried she.

"I feel something!" said he, with mystery in his tones.

"Yes!" answered she, skipping about with clasped hands.

"What is it?" And there was a rattling, as of stiff paper, down in the depths of his pocket.

"Candy!" cried she, with a shout, capering higher than ever.

He withdrew the package from his pocket with a slowness which made her dance with impatience; opened

one end, peeped into it cautiously, and gave her a beaming look of delighted surprise.

"Let me look, too!" cried she; and he held it down. She, peeping in, returned his look of surprised delight.

What would life be without its fictions!

"It's candy!" cried she; and seizing the package, and putting a piece into her mouth, she made for the steps.

"Why, where are you going?"

"I am going to show my candy to sister Lucy," replied she, munching.

"Won't you give me a piece?"

"Yes," replied she, toddling back with alacrity.

"Don't take a big piece," cautioned she, when she saw him examining the contents of the precious package.

"Take a little piece."

The stranger smiled. "Laura," said he, "there is a good deal of human nature in man; don't you think so?"

"Yeth, ma'am," replied she, abstractedly; with one hand thrusting into her mouth a second piece, while with the other she reached down into the bag for a third.

"You seem to like candy?"

"Yeth, I doeth," without looking up.

"Come," said he, taking the package and closing it; "if you eat it all, you won't have any to show your sister Lucy; besides, it will make you sick."

"Candy don't never make me sick. I can show sister Lucy the booful bag what the candy came in. Where is the speckled candy?"

"Oh, the man didn't have any."

"If he has any, another to-morrow, will you make him send me some?"

"Oh, yes; but let's talk a little."

"May I have another little piece?"

"There! So you are the little girl who doesn't know what her mother's name is?"

"Yes, I does; my mother's name is named Laura. My mother is named the same as me. My name is Laura, too."

Our coaching had told.

"So your mother's name is Laura, is it?" And the stranger nodded his head slowly up and down. "And where is your mother now?"

"She is at our house."

"And where is your house?"

"Our house is where my mother is. There is a river where our house is. Don't you like to sail in a boat on a river? I'm going to take another piece." And with a roguish, though hesitating smile, she began to insert her dimpled hand into the bag.

The stranger was looking upon the ground, and heeded neither the smile nor the movement against the bag.

"Where do you go in your boat?"

She mentioned the name of a neighbor of my grandfather's, across the river from her home.

"And where else?"

Another of our neighbors. The stranger repeated the two names with satisfaction.

"And where else?"

He never once lifted his eyes from the pavement; and there was a sort of suppressed eagerness in his voice that thrilled us all with a strange excitement, we knew not why.

"We sail in our boat to see Uncle Tom." [Many of the young people in our neighborhood called my grandfather by this name.]

"Oh, you mean your Uncle Tom—let me see,"—and a faint smile illumined his face,—“you mean your Uncle Tom—Mulligins?"

"No-o-o-o! Minty-pepper ain't dood. It stings my mouf."

"Ah, yes, I know,—you sail in your boat to—see—your—Uncle Tom—Higginbotham."

Perhaps she dimly perceived that he was drolling; at any rate, she doubled herself up with an affected little laugh.

"No, I will tell you," said he, raising his eyes to her face,—“it is your Uncle Tom Whacker."

The audience half rose from their seats. "Why, who can he be?" exclaimed Mrs. Carter.

"Yes; that's his right name,—Uncle Mr. Whacker. I calls him Uncle Tom. He is a hundred years old, I reckon. My sister loves Mr. Uncle Whacker some, but she loves Mr.—Mr.—Mr. Fat Whacker the most." [Sensation!]

As this is the second remark of this character on Laura's part that I have recorded, it is high time that I explained that the idea had naturally enough arisen in her mind from hearing Mary and Alice rally her sister upon the increased frequency of my visits to the Carters' since her arrival in town.

"Do you love me some?"

"Yes, I loves you a heap!"

"And I loves you a heap, too," said he; and stooping, he kissed her several times. "And now I suppose you had better run in and show your candy to your sister Lucy."

"All wight!" said she; and she toddled off.

CHAPTER VI.

THE morning following these occurrences, and for several days thereafter, I had occasion to be absent from town. Calling at the Carters' on the evening of my return, I found that the daily visits of the mysterious stranger had not been interrupted. There was, however, nothing of special interest to report. The interviews with Laura had been short, and marked only by the invariable production of the package of candy. When I expressed fears for that young lady's digestion, I learned that, owing to a like solicitude, the girls had shared the danger with Laura so magnanimously that her health was in no immediate peril.

"Here are still some of the remains of to-day's spoil," said Alice, handing me a collapsed package.

"Well," said I, "now that you have seen him so often, what do you think of him? What are your theories?"

"There are as many opinions as there are girls," said Mrs. Carter. "What is mine? Well, I should suppose that I was too old to express an opinion upon such romantic affairs. But one thing I will say, he is undoubtedly a gentleman."

"Oh, thank you, mamma!" cried Alice, running up to her mother and kissing her on the cheek with what the French call effusion,—*"thank you!"*

"And what are you up to now, Rattle-brain?" asked her mother, looking at her daughter with a smile full of affectionate admiration.

"You see, Mr. Whacker," said Alice, turning to me with earnest gravity in her eyes, under which their irrepressible twinkle could have been discernible only to those who knew her well,—*"you see I have been in love with him ever since I first saw him, and I infer from mamma's remark that should anything ever come of it, I should find in her an ally."*

"Well, we shall see," said her mother, laughing.

"And what does Miss Mary think of him?"

"Oh, I'll tell you," promptly began Alice. "Mary, who is, you know, of a very romant—"

"Suppose, Miss Chatterbox, you will be so good," interrupted her mother, "as to let Mary speak for herself."

"'Tis ever thus," sighed Alice, pouting, "never allowed to open my poor little mouth!"

"I give you permission now," said Mary. "Tell Mr. Whacker, if you know, what I think of the Don."

"The who?"

"The Don; that's what we call him."

"What! is he a Spaniard?"

"Not at all. You must know, we put Laura up to asking him his name, and she brought back the drollest one imaginable,—*'Don Miff.'* Think of it! But of course Laura got it all wrong; that could not be any human being's name,—of course not."

"The Don part of it," broke in Alice, "has confirmed Mary in her previously entertained opinion that he was a nobleman of some sort travelling *incog.*; it would be so novelly, you know; though what good it could do

her I cannot conceive, even were it so, for it was I who 'sighted' him first; it was I to whom he first offered his hand; mark that! it was I who first fell in love with him; and I wish it distinctly understood that as against the present company"—and she made a sweeping courtesy—"he—is—MINE!"

"I waive all my rights," said I.

"Yes; but I don't know how it will be with these girls, particularly Mary; for Mary is, in my opinion, already infatuated,—yes, *infatuated* with this Don Miff, as he calls himself."

"Why, Alice, how can you say so?" But an explosion all around the circle aroused Mary to the consciousness that once more and for the thousand and first time she had failed to detect the banter that lay in ambush behind her friend's assumed earnestness. "Oh, I knew you couldn't mean it," said she, with a faint smile. "The truth is, Mr. Whacker," continued she, "I am not sure that I altogether like this mysterious Don. Do you know, Alice, I should be afraid of him?"

"Afraid of him! Why, pray?"

"Well, perhaps I am jumping at conclusions, as they say we women all do; but, unless I am greatly mistaken, that man, while he might be a very staunch friend, is certainly capable of proving a most unrelenting foe."

"Oh, I am sure you do him injustice," said Lucy.

This young woman was not a great talker; but whenever the absent needed a defender, the suffering a friend, or the down-trodden a champion, that gentle voice was not wanting.

"I am sure nothing could surpass the gentleness of his manner towards little Laura."

"Very true," rejoined Mary; "but have you not noticed the expression of his eyes at times, when he is pacing to and fro, as he did for some time yesterday, reviewing in his mind, I should judge, some event in his past life? Every now and then there would come into them a look so stern and bitter as to give his countenance an expression which might almost be called ferocious."

"Oh, Mr. Whacker, I think Mary's imagination must be running away with her," broke in Lucy. "Now let me tell you of an incident which all of us witnessed one day while you were absent. The day had been damp and raw; and just as Mr. Don Miff—I don't wonder at your laughing,—was there ever such a name before? What was I saying? Ah! there came on one of those cold October rains just as the Don was going away. He had taken but a few steps when his attention was arrested by the whining of a little dog across the street. What kind of a dog did you say it was, Mrs. Carter?"

"It was a Mexican dog, a wretched little thing, of a breed which is almost entirely destitute of hair. Our volunteers brought home some of them, as curiosities, on their return from the Mexican war. The one Lucy is speaking of is very old, and is, likely enough, the last representative of his species in the city."

"Well," resumed Lucy, "the poor, little, naked creature was whining piteously in the rain, and pawing against that alley-gate over yonder by that large tree; and when this ferocious man, whom Mary thinks so terrible, saw him, he stopped, then moved on, then stopped again, and at last, seeing that the little thing had been shut out, he actually walked across the street and opened the gate for him!"

"That was very sweet of my Don!" chimed in Alice.

"Yes," urged Lucy, with gentle warmth, "you girls may laugh, and you, Mr. Whacker, may smile—"

"Upon my word—"

"Oh, I saw you—but the ferocity of a man who is tender with children and kind to brutes is ferocity of a very mild form, and I—"

"Speech! speech!" cried Alice, clapping her hands. And Lucy sank back in her chair, blushing at her own eloquence.

"Order! order! ladies and gentlemen," cried Alice, gravely tapping on the table with a spoon. "Sister Rolfe, the convention would be pleased to hear from you, at this stage of the proceedings, a continuation of your very edifying observations touching the lord Don

Miff's exceedingly alarming eyes. Sister Rolfe has the floor—order! The chair must insist that the fat lady on the sofa come to order!"

The last remark was levelled at her mother, who had a singular way of laughing; to wit, shaking all over, without emitting the slightest sound, while big tears rolled down her cheeks. Alice was the idol of her heart, and her queer freaks of vivacious drollery often set her mother off, as at present, into uncontrollable undulations of entirely inaudible laughter.

"The fat lady on the sofa, I am happy to be able to announce to the audience, is coming to."

"Yes," said Mrs. Carter, wiping her eyes, "and do you cease your crazy pranks till the fat lady gets her breath. What were you going to say, Mary?"

"I was going to say that I am glad I said what I did, if for no other reason than that it afforded us all another opportunity of seeing how kind and charitable is Lucy's heart."

"Yes," said Alice, "you elicited from Lucy her maiden speech; which I had never expected to hear in this life."

"But really," continued Mary, "the Don's eyes are peculiar. Do you know what I have thought of, more than once, when I have seen their rapidly changing expression? I was reminded of certain stars which—"

"Reminiscences of our late astronomy class," broke in Alice, in a stage whisper.

Mary smiled, but continued: "of certain stars which seem first to shrink and then to dilate,—now growing dark, at the next moment shooting forth bickering flames,—at one time—"

Mary here caught Alice's eye, and could get no farther.

Alice rose slowly to her feet and said, gravely waving her closed fan as though it had been the wand of a showman, "This, ladies and gentlemen, is not a speech, but poetry and romance. I would simply observe that when a young woman begins by stating that she does not like a certain man, and ends by comparing his eyes to stars, the last state of that young woman shall be

worse than the first. But I am somehow reminded of the Moonlight Sonata. Mr. Whacker, I beg you will conduct Miss Lucy to the piano."

• CHAPTER VII.

"WHAT do you think?" said I, the next afternoon, as I entered the parlor. The young ladies were all there; Lucy, with whom I had an engagement to walk, with her bonnet on.

"Oh, what is it?"

"What do you suppose? Guess?"

"You have found out who he is!"

"Not exactly."

"You have seen him!"

"Well, yes."

"Have you met him,—spoken with him?"

I nodded.

"Oh, do tell us all about it!"

"There is not much to tell. Just this moment, on my way here, I came upon Laura and her nurse and the Don standing at the corner. Laura did not observe me till I was close to her, but, as soon as she did, she ran up and took hold of my hand, and said, pointing straight at the Don, 'He's the one what gives me the candy;' and, immediately releasing my hand, she ran up and seized that of the so-called Don Miff, and, looking up into his face, said, 'That ain't Uncle Mr. Whacker. That's Mr. Fat Whacker. He's the one what'—" And I paused.

"Oh, please go on!" cried Alice and Mary; while Lucy colored slightly.

"I think I shall have to leave that as a riddle to be worked out at your leisure."

"Oh, the terrible infant! What did you say? what could you say?"

"I scarcely know what I did or did not say. He spoke first, saying something about the originality of

Laura's mode of introducing people, and I made some confused, meaningless reply, and then, after we had exchanged a few commonplaces—"

"Miss Lucy!" broke in a voice; and, looking up, we saw, thrust in at the partly-open parlor-door, the face of Molly, the nurse. "Miss Lucy, won't you please, ma'am, step here a minute?"

The broad grin on her face excited curiosity, while it allayed alarm.

"Why, what's the matter, Molly?"

"Dat gent'mun say—" And Molly was straightway overcome by an acute attack of the giggles.

"What?"

"Dat 'ere gent'mun he axed me to ax de lady o' de house ef he mought'n take Laura round to Pizzini's for some ice-cream."^{*}

This was before the days of the Charley Ross horror; but the proposition threw all the young ladies into a ferment, and ejaculation followed ejaculation in rapid succession. At last Alice rose, flew up-stairs, and presently returned with her mother.

"What's all this?" began Mrs. Carter.

"Yes, ma'am, dis is adzactly how 'twas. Laura and me, we was a-standin' on the cornder a-lookin', and here comes de gent'mun dat's always a-bringin' her de candy, and, says he, 'Good-evenin', little Rosebud,' says jess so, and 'Howdy do, my gal,' says he, polite-like, and says I, 'Sarvant, mahster,' says I, 'I'm about,' says I; and den Marse Jack he comed up, and Laura, she called Marse Jack out o' he name. 'Lor' me,' says I, 'chill'un don't know no better.' Howsomdever, I told her, I did, 'Heish!' says I, easy-like, and 'Mind your raisin,' says I, jess as I tell you, and Marse Jack will say de same; and Marse Jack he comed on here to de house, and we was a-standin' on de cornder, and de gent'mun says, 'Laura,' says he, 'I ain't got no candy for you to-day, but I want you to go wid me to Piz-

* In my occasional attempts at representing the negro dialect I shall (as I have already done in the case of Laura's prattle) hold a middle course between the true and the intelligible.

zini's to get some ice-cream and cake; and won't you go, my gal,' says he, 'an' ax de lady of the house, down yonder, ef I mought'n take little Laura to Pizzini's?' Dat's jess what he said, he did, jess as I tell you, mum; and Laura she clap her hands, she did, and 'Come on, less go,' says she, widout waitin' for nothin' nor nobody, she did."

A brisk discussion, with opinions about equally divided, now sprang up as to the propriety of acceding to the request of the stranger; but upon Molly's stating that the gentleman expected her to accompany Laura, a strong majority voted in the affirmative; and when the little lady herself, unable to control her impatience, came bustling into the parlor, her curls dancing, her cheeks glowing, her eyes sparkling with expectancy, the proposition was carried unanimously; to the obvious satisfaction of Molly, who lost no time in sallying forth with her little charge.

"There they go!" said Lucy, who was peeping through the blinds; "the Don and Laura hand in hand, and Molly bringing up the rear. Ah, how the little thing is capering with delight! Ah, girls, run here and see how the little woman is strutting! Now he is pointing out to her a cow and calf."

And so, as long as they remained in sight, she chronicled their doings.

As Lucy and I were leaving the house for our walk, some one suggested—it was Mary, I believe—that it would be as well to shadow, in detective phrase, the Don; but she firmly refused to do so, saying that she knew she could trust him. Still, the suggestion left its trail upon her mind; and she exhibited an eager delight when we, on our return, saw, at the distance of a couple of blocks, the Don taking leave of Laura in front of the Carters'.

"I knew it," said she, with modest triumph. "Mary has read so many novels and poems that she lives in constant expectation of adventures; as though an adventure could happen to any one in steady-going Richmond! Mr. Whacker!" she suddenly exclaimed, starting.

"What's the matter?"

"He is coming this way! What *shall* we do?" And she stood as though rooted to the pavement, helplessly looking about her for some avenue of escape.

"Why, what do you fear?" said I, laughing.

"That's true," said she; and she moved forward again, though with very uncertain tread.

"Mr. Whacker," said she, presently, "would you mind giving me your arm?"

Meanwhile, the Don was coming up the street; and, as he approached us, I could see that his features were softened by a half smile. We met, face to face, at the corner above the Carters'. His eyes chancing to fall upon my face, it was obvious that he recognized me. Indeed, I am sure he gave me something like a bow, then glancing casually at Lucy. Just at this juncture she, for the first time, looked up, and their eyes met. It was then that I understood what Mary had said about his eyes. For a second his steps seemed almost arrested, and his eyes, filled with a strange mixture of curiosity and intense interest, seemed to dilate and to shoot forth actual gleams of light. Lucy, who was leaning heavily upon my arm, shivered throughout her entire frame.

"Why, what can be the matter?"

"I am sure I don't know," replied she, in a hollow voice. "Let us hurry home,—I can hardly breathe!"

Arrived in front of the house, within which was to be heard the busy chattering of Laura and our other friends, Lucy hurried in at the gate, and, without attempting to enter the house, dropped down upon the first step she reached, and leaning back, drew a long breath.

"Mr. Whacker," said she, after a few moments' silence, "you must really excuse me. I cannot conceive what made me so silly. What is he to me? But do you know, sometimes the strangest ideas come into my head, and I often wonder whether other people have the same. Sometimes I will visit some place for the first time, and suddenly it will seem to me that I have been there before, although I know all the time that it is not so. And again I will be listening to some

one relating an incident just happened, and it will seem such an old story to me; and it will seem as though I had heard just the same story ages and ages ago. Do you know, I sometimes think that the ancients—however, it is all nonsense, of course. But oh, I would not feel again as I did just now for worlds! Do you know, when he passed me, I felt a sort of subtle, aerial force, a kind of magnetic influence, as it is called, drawing me towards him, and so strongly, that nothing but the firm grasp I had on your arm saved me from rushing up to him and taking him by the hand. And then, when I passed him, without speaking to him, suddenly there came over me the strangest feeling. Will you think me crazy if I tell you what it was?"

"By no means," said I, much interested.

"Well,—will you believe me?—a sudden pang of remorse."

"Remorse!"

"Yes; I cannot think of a better word. It seemed to me as though I had known him ages ago, in some other world, such as the Pythagoreans imagined, and that I, bright and young and happy, meeting him again, I, though I saw he was unhappy, cruelly passed him by! Oh, Mr. Whacker, I do pity him so!"

Her lower lip trembled, and her soft brown eyes glistened with rising tears. For a while neither of us spoke,—she, perhaps, afraid to trust her voice, I respecting her emotion by silence.

"Yes," said I, at length, "it is an old story. 'What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?' We cannot help, though we would, feeling the sorrows of others. But, Miss Lucy, aren't you letting your imagination—no, your tender-heartedness—run away with your judgment? Here is a great, strapping, fine-looking fellow, whom you have seen passing along the street a few times, with a rather serious expression of countenance, and you straightway jump to the conclusion that he is profoundly miserable, and even shed tears over his fate."

"Yes, it is all very silly, of course," said she, smiling, and brushing away her tears.

"And you must admit that you have not a particle of evidence, not a scintilla, as we lawyers say, that the Don is any more to be pitied than I, or any other person of your acquaintance."

"Oh, a woman's rules of evidence are very different from what you lawyers find in your great, dusty, dull volumes. See how *I* should state the case. I see a great, strapping, fine-looking fellow, to borrow your language, coming here, day after day, from I know not how far, or at how great inconvenience to himself, with no other object, so far as I can divine, save that of enjoying the affectionate greetings of a little child of less than four years of age, whom he met by chance, and who, though nothing to him, in one sense seems everything to him, in that her childish love has gone out to him. What kind of a home must this man have, do you think? He can have *no* home. And yet you wonder that I am sorry for him!"

"No," said I, gladly seizing the opportunity of changing the current of her thoughts; "it is true that the views you hold of evidence do not coincide with those of Greenleaf; but I have long since ceased to wonder at your feeling sorry for anybody or anything. The number of kettles that, of my certain knowledge, have, through your intercession, *not* been tied to stray dogs' tails, and the hosts of cats that have escaped twine cravats—"

"How cruel you boys used to be!"

"Why, Lucy, how long have you been there?" cried Alice, leaning out of the window. "Come here, Mary, and look at them,—it is a clear case. Laura," added she, looking back into the parlor, but speaking loud enough for us to hear,—"*Laura*, for one so juvenile, your diagnosis is singularly accurate."

"H'm? Whose noses?" asked Laura, looking up from the doll she was dressing.

CHAPTER VIII.

I THINK it will be allowed that, whatever else this story may be, it has been, so far, genteel. It is with regret, therefore, that, in the very opening of this eighth chapter, I find myself driven to the use of a word which hardly seems to comport with the previous dignity of our narrative. But, after turning the matter over in my mind again and again, I have found it impossible to discover any satisfactory synonyme, or invent any delicately-phrased equivalent for the very plebeian vocable in question. With the reader's kind permission, therefore—

To a philosopher and a philanthropist (and I am somewhat of both, after a Bushwhackerish fashion) the word *Lager Bier* should undoubtedly be one of the most precious additions to a language already rich in such expressive linguistic combinations as Jersey Lightning, Gin Sling, Rum and Gum, Rye and Rock, Kill-Round-The-Corner, Santa Cruz Sour, Stone Fence, Forty-Rod, Dead Shot, etc., etc., etc., not to mention a host of such etymological simples as Juleps, Smashes, Straights, and Cobblers. For the introduction into this country of the mild tippie it indicates has unquestionably done more to arrest drunkenness than all the temperance societies that have been, are, or shall be. Still, the word itself, spell it how you will, has hardly a distinguished air; and hence I long sought, and should gladly have adopted, some such aristocratic expression as Brew of the Black Forest, Nectar of Gambrinus, Deutscher's Dew, Suevorum Gaudium (*i.e.* Schwabs' Bliss)—some genteel phrase, in a word—but that I was unwilling to sacrifice precision to elegance.

Now, the necessity that I am under of alluding to the Solace of Arminius at all, arises in the simplest way.

At the period of which I am writing, this beverage, newly introduced, had great vogue in Richmond, notably

among the young men. Especially did college-bred young fellows give in a prompt adhesion to the new faith; and if, in any party of such, assembled to discuss, in a double sense, this new ethereal mildness, there was found any man who had attended the German universities, that man was the lion of the evening. His it was to excite our wonder by reciting deeds of prowess that he had witnessed; his to tell us what had been done; his to show us how it could be done again. I wonder whether a young medical man whom I knew in those days (now a staid and solid doctor) remembers the laugh which greeted him when he essayed to explain, to an attentive class that he was coaching in the new knowledge, how the German students managed actually to pour their beer down their throats,—swallowed it without swallowing, that is.

"It is the simplest thing in the world," said he. "See here." And turning a glass upside down over his mouth, its entire contents disappeared without the slightest visible movement of his throat. "Didn't you see how it was done? The whole secret lies in the *voluntary suppression of the peristaltic action of the œsophagus.*"

"The deuse you say!" cried a pupil. "Then, if that be so, I for one say, Let's all suppress." And that became the word with our set for that season, and much beer perished.

Why is it that a man recalls with such pleasure the follies of his youth? And why is it that the wise things we do make so little impression on our minds? For my own part, I can remember, without an effort, scores of absurdities that I have been guilty of, while of acts of wisdom scarcely one occurs to me.

The favorite haunt of my beer-drinking friends at this period was a smallish room,—you could not have called it a saloon,—a regular nest of a place, situated, not to be too explicit, not very far from, say Fourth Street. Our little nook stood alone in that part of the city, and, being so isolated in an exceedingly quiet neighborhood, it met exactly the wants of the jovial though orderly set of young professional men who,

with the honest Teutons of the vicinage, frequented it.

Well, on the occasion to which I have referred, half a dozen of us were grouped around a table, and were unusually merry and bright. Our doctor's new word had been hailed as a real acquisition, in honor of which there was some sparkling of wit, and more of beer,—a happy saying being as real a provocative of thirst as a pretzel,—and, moreover, there had arisen between him and a young and promising philologist, lately graduated at the university, and since become a distinguished professor in the land, a philologico-anatomical, seriological discussion, in which the philologist maintained that it was hopeless for American to emulate German youth in this matter of drinking beer, while at the same time maintaining a voluntary suppression of the peristaltic action of the œsophagus, for the very simple reason that the throat of the German, incessantly opened wide in pronouncing the gutturals of his language, and hardened by the passage of these rough sounds, becomes in process of time an open pipe, a clear, firm tube,—in a word, a regular rat-hole of a throat, such as no English-speaking youth might reasonably aspire to. The medical man, I remember, came back at him with the quick smile of one who knows, and asked him if he did not confound the larynx with the œsophagus.

"I do," broke in a young lawyer.

"You do what?"

"I confound the larynxes and œsophagusses of both of you. Mine are growing thirsty. I say, boys, let's suppress 'em both. Here, fünf bier!"

The mild Teuton behind the bar obeyed the order with a smile. He was never so well pleased as when a debate arose among us, sure that every flash of wit, every stroke of humor, would be followed by a call for beers all round.

I don't think we ever drank more than we did on that evening (I really believe the beer was better then than now); and just as we were in the midst of one of our highest bursts of hilarity the door opened behind me.

"Hello!" said the doctor, in a whisper; "there's our grenadier!"

Turning, I saw Don Miff standing by the counter, exchanging in the German language a few commonplaces (as I supposed) with the dispenser of beer.

"Who is he? Where did you ever see him before?" I asked.

"Why, here, of course. Is it possible that this is the first time you have seen him? Why, he has been coming here every evening for a week at least. Ah, I remember, you have not put in an appearance for about that time. We boys have nicknamed him 'the Grenadier.' He always takes a seat at that table where he is now, and, after sitting about an hour, and drinking two or three glasses of beer, goes off. We are curious to know who the deuse he can be."

"Does he always come alone?"

"Invariably. Never speaks to a soul, save Hans, of course. What! do you know him?"

The Don's eyes and mine had met, and we had bowed; he with the smile courteous, I with the smile expansive and bland, born of many beers.

"No; I can't say that I do. I have met him on the street merely. But I am rather interested in him,—why, I will tell you hereafter. I say, boys," I continued, "let's have him over here."

"Good!"

I approached the Don with my sweetest smile, and, saluting him, said something about our being a jolly party over at our table, and wouldn't he join us?

"Thanks; with pleasure," said he, rising; and the "boys," seeing him approach, made room for him with much hospitable bustle.

"Mr. Smith," said he, in a low voice, as we crossed the room.

"Mr. Whacker," replied I; and, seizing his hand, I shook it with unctuous cordiality.

Are we not all brethren?

CHAPTER IX.

"WELL, fair damsels, I have found out the great, great secret!"

"Oh, do tell us! Who is he?"

"Who he is I cannot say, but I now know his name."

"Then Don Miff is not his real name!" said Mary, with a rather injured air. "But of course we could not expect, in our every-day world, to meet an actual person with such a name as that."

"I should think not," said Alice. "But what is his name, Mr. Whacker? How fearfully slow you are, when we are dying of curiosity, as you know!"

"How stupid we have all been!" said I.

"In what respect?"

"How shockingly, dismally stupid and obtuse!"

"But how?"

"Did you not put Laura up to asking his name? You did. And did she not bring back the words *Don Miff* as the result of her investigations, and none of us ever suspected the plain English of the matter?"

Here Alice gave a little shriek and fell upon a sofa.

"Just listen," said I to Mary and Lucy, who were looking from Alice to me, and from me to Alice, with a bewildered air. "Listen carefully. J-o-h-n S-m-i-t-h, John Smith, or, according to Laura, Don Miff!"

"Impossible!" cried Mary, with a resolute stamp of her foot.

"But he told me his name himself."

"I can't help what he told you; but no one shall ever make me believe that his name is John Smith. There are people named Smith, of course."

"No fair-minded person would deny that," said Alice.

"Why, Mary, there is your own Aunt Judy."

"Yes, dear old Aunt Judy!" said Mary, smiling.

"But *John* Smith, Alice,—*John*! Now can you believe that any Smith, senior, in the full blaze of the nineteenth century, would name his son *John*?"

"I think it in the highest degree improbable," said Alice.

"Improbable, Alice? Why, it is preposterous. At any rate, be there or be there not John Smiths in the world, that is not *his* name."

"With his starry eyes!" put in Alice, languishingly.

"With his starry eyes!" repeated Mary, smiling. "No; say what he will, John Smith is no more his name than Don Miff was. And as I, somehow; like the oddity of the latter, Don Miff shall he be with me till the end of the chapter."

"Selah!" said Alice.

CHAPTER X.

THE most dangerous gift that a man can possess is superior skill in perilous employments. Sooner or later the most illustrious lion-tamer furnisheth forth funeral unbaked meats to the lordly beast he has so long bullied. Sooner or later, dies miserably the snake-charmer, charm he never so wisely. The noble art of self-defence has been brought to high perfection; but you shall no more find a prize-fighter with a straight nose than a rope-dancer with sound ribs. Every now and then (for the danger is not confined to the experts themselves) a bullet, advertised to perforate an orange, ploughs the scalp (though rarely reaching the brain) of its human support; and I make no doubt that the eminent pippin upon which Swiss liberty is based might have been placed once too often on his son's head, had not William Tell abandoned, when he did, archery for politics.

I have been led into this train of thought by an accident which befell a number of the actors in our drama, through intrusting their limbs, their lives, and their sacred necks to the keeping of a young man who was reputed to be the best driver of Richmond in his day.

Now, no true artist is content unless he may exhibit his virtuosity; and this young man, like all crack

whips, had conceived the notion that the art of driving consisted, not in bringing back his passengers to their point of departure, safe and sound, but rather in showing how near he could take them to the gates of Paradise without actually ushering them therein. To him the sweetest incense was the long-drawn sigh of relief breathed out by his friends when deposited, once again and alive, at their front door. Who but he could have controlled such untrained horses,—spirited is what he calls them? Who passed that wagon at that precise spot,—made that rapid turn without upsetting?

Think not, my boy, that it escapes me that in your bright day of things perfected there will be no more drivers of horses,—nor horses either, for that matter, save in zoological gardens. Not forgetting this, but remembering that human nature remains the same, have I written these words. Beware, then, oh, last lingering male, perhaps, of the line of the Whackers, beware of the crack balloonist of your favored time!

There were four of us. Lucy and Alice sat on the rear seat, Sthenelus and I in front, on a rather more elevated position. Returning from our drive, we are rapidly moving down Franklin Street. A heavy country wagon is just in front of us, and not far behind it, though rather on the other side of the street, another creeps along, both meeting us. The problem was to pass between them. One of those fellows who knows nothing about driving would have brought his horses down to a walk, and crept through in inglorious safety. Not so Sthenelus. With him glory was above safety; and so, leaning forward, he lightly agitated the reins along the backs of his rapid bays, and we whizzed past the first wagon. The next instant our charioteer went sprawling over the dashboard, carrying the reins with him; though I, foreseeing the collision with the second wagon, had braced myself for the shock, and so managed to retain my seat.

The horses bounded instantly forward, and rushed down the street with an ever-increasing speed. The usual scene occurred. Ladies who chanced to be crossing the street, shrank back in terror to the sidewalk.

Nurses scurried hither and thither, gathering up their charges. Men stood in the middle of the street, shouting and sawing their arms, waving hats, umbrellas, handkerchiefs, but getting out of the way just in time to let the more and more frantic horses pass; while troops of boys came rushing down every cross-street, their eyes a-glitter with barbaric joy, and shouting back the glad tidings to their toiling but shorter-legged comrades in the rear.

Where do all the boys come from?

But wild with terror as they were, the horses turned up the cross-street along which they had been driven earlier in the afternoon,—the one, that is, intersecting Leigh one block above the Carters',—and up this they rushed with a terrific clatter.

Meanwhile, I had not been idle. Immediately upon the fall of our charioteer and the bounding forward of the horses, both girls had sprung to their feet with a cry of horror; but I shouted to them to sit down, and they obeyed. Alice, however, with every jolt of unusual severity would rise and attempt to leap from the vehicle, and again and again I had to seize her and thrust her back into her seat. Lucy, on the contrary, gave me no further trouble. Asby pale, with her hands clasped, she sat trembling and silent, her appealing eyes fixed upon me. At last I insisted upon their sitting upon the floor of the carriage, assuring them, in as confident a tone as I could muster, that there was no danger if they would but resolutely hold that position; and in this, too, they obeyed me, though in Alice's case I had to supplement my commands by a firm grip upon her shoulder.

At last, when we were approaching Leigh Street at a furious pace, and the horses were turning into it, a well-meaning man rushed, with a loud "whoa," at the horse nearest him, at the same time belaboring him with his umbrella; and this producing an extra burst of speed, the carriage made the turn literally on two wheels; so that, in momentary expectation of an upset, I instinctively released my hold on Alice's shoulder and seized the edge of my seat; while the girls were so

frightened that Alice sprang up, and, with a wild cry, threw her arms around my neck, Lucy, at the same time, seizing my right arm.

The two girls pulling down upon me with all the strength of panic-terror, there was no help for it. My heels flew up in the air, my legs assuming the shape of a gigantic V.

Picture to yourself, gentle reader, Mr. Fat Whacker moving down Leigh Street in this alphabetical order!

Even had I not been throttled almost to suffocation, I believe my face would have been red with shame,—often a more powerful emotion than the fear of death. (I, for example, once saw an officer, while the battle of Spottsylvania Court-House was raging, blush, instead of turning pale, when a cannon-ball, rushing past him, annihilated the seat of his trousers.)

And this is what I saw, looking through that V as a sharpshooter through the hind-sight of his rifle.

I saw the Don and Laura cosily sitting on the carriage-block, with their backs towards us, the nurse standing near by. Molly saw us as soon as we turned into Leigh Street, and knowing the horses, I suppose (all recognition of me being, I must presume, out of the question), rushed up to the Don with a scream. He leaped to his feet, and, taking in the situation at a glance, sprang into the middle of the street.

Perhaps the effect was intensified to me by the concentration of light wrought by the involuntary hind-sight arrangement of my legs; possibly my perceptive faculties, stimulated by the situation, were unusually keen; but the bearing and look of the Don remain to this day indelibly impressed upon my memory. Hatless, he stood in the middle of the street, one leg advanced, and with both arms, after the fashion of ball-players, extended to the front. But it was his countenance that struck me most. His grimly-set lips, his distended nostrils, his brows intensely knit over his darkly glancing eyes, but, above all, his head, thrown back, and rocking to and fro in sympathy with the oscillations of the approaching team, gave him a look of ferocious disdain.

It is with just such a look, I can imagine, that a lion, famished and desperate, after long and vain hunting of giraffe or gazelle, prepares to spring, from his tangled ambuscade of rushes, upon the horns of an approaching bull. What must be done, saith his mighty heart, must be done—and done bravely.

'Twas Milton's Satan stood there!

But just as the grimness of the countenance of Clearchus appeared odious to his soldiers in camp, but lovely in the hour of battle, so the look I have been describing seemed to me, at this critical juncture, to rival the beautiful disdain of Byron's Apollo Belvedere. It was the sternly confident look of a man who scorned to rank failure among possibilities.

What would have been the result, had the horses held their straight course down the middle of the street, we can only conjecture, but such was the force of habit that, frantic as they were, they bore so far to the left, just before reaching the Don, that the left wheels rattled along the gutter, within a few inches of the carriage-block, up to which they had so frequently been driven by their owner. The Don rushed to the right to intercept them, and, just as they were about to pass him, sprang upon the head of the off horse with an inarticulate cry so fierce, and a vigor so tremendous, that the animal, partly thrown back upon his haunches, swerved, in his terror, violently to the left, forcing his mate upon the sidewalk. But the Don had leaped too far. Struck in the right side by the pole, he was hurled to the ground, his head striking the pavement with great force. In a moment of time both hoofs and wheels had passed over his prostrate form.

"Oh!" shrieked the girls, releasing me, and clasping their hands with mingled compassion and terror.

The V collapsed, and in an instant I went spinning over the dash-board.

The near-horse, his neck broken against the lamp-post, lay stone dead; while the other, his traces burst, stood trembling in every fibre, and, as he pulled back against the reins, which still held him, uneasily snorting at his lifeless yoke-fellow.

CHAPTER XI.

I WAS somewhat stunned by my fall, but extricating myself from my entanglements, I rose just in time to see Alice spring from the carriage, followed by Lucy. The latter fell as she alighted from the carriage, but before I could reach her the Don had staggered up to her and lifted her from the ground. He was hardly recognizable. His clothes were soiled and torn, and blood was streaming from two ugly gashes in his face,—one on his forehead and another in his right cheek.

"I trust you are not hurt?" said he.

"Not at all," answered Lucy, quickly, before she had looked at him, or knew, in fact, who had assisted her to rise. "Oh," cried she, clasping her hands, when she caught sight of his face, "but you are dreadfully hurt!"

"Oh, no," replied he, with a ghastly smile; "merely a few scratches."

"Oh, but you are! Alice! Mr. Whacker! The gentleman—"

But her further utterance was interrupted by the almost hysterical entrance upon the scene of Mrs. Carter, who flew from one girl to the other pale and tremulous, endeavoring to assure herself, by repeated embraces, that they were not dead. In a few moments a miscellaneous crowd had clustered around our party, through which Mary, who had witnessed the accident from her window, rushed to greet her friends. To add to the confusion, little Laura, her nerves unstrung by the scene, was wailing piteously; so that, for a moment, we forgot the Don.

"Look! oh, look!" suddenly cried Lucy, in an excited voice; and seizing me by the arm, she gave me a push. "Quick! quick!" said she, pointing towards our deliverer.

He was leaning heavily against the lamp-post, which, for support, he had clasped with his arms; but, their hold relaxed, they had fallen and hung listlessly by his

side. With pallid face, vacant, upturned eyes, and parted lips, he was slowly sinking to the ground.

I sprang forward, but too late to catch him as he fell, or, rather, sank gently to the pavement, his head finding a pillow in the body of the dead horse.

"Who is he, Mary? How was he hurt?" asked Mrs. Carter, eagerly, as she saw Lucy hurrying to his side, and bending over him with an expression of agonized terror in her face.

"It is the Don. He tried to stop the horses, but was knocked down, and then both they and the carriage passed over his body."

Mrs. Carter was by his side in an instant. His eyes were closed, but opening them slightly, and seeing her sympathizing looks, a faint smile illumined his ashy-pale features.

"Ask some of these people," whispered Mrs. Carter, "to help you carry him into the house."

He seemed to hear her, for his eyes opened again and his lips moved, though they gave forth no sound.

"What's the m-m-m-matter, Jack?"

Feeling a hand on my shoulder, I turned and saw my friend Charley.

"What, you in the city! You are just in time. We want to take this gentleman into Mr. Carter's."

Charley and I took hold of his head and shoulders, some volunteers his body and limbs, and, lifting him gently, we moved towards the house. Some papers fell out of his breast-pocket as we raised him from the ground, which Charley gathered together and put into his own pocket for the time being.

"Where shall we take him?" I inquired, as we entered the hall.

"Up-stairs, into the front room. Here, this way," said Mrs. Carter. "Alice," said she, suddenly stopping midway on the stairs, "send for the doctor, instantly. This way,—gently. Ah, here we are at last! This room. There, lay him on that bed. Thank you, gentlemen. Now, Lucy dear, bring me some water and towels. Thank you. Don't be so alarmed, child; he will soon revive." And she gently passed a corner of

the moistened towel over his soiled and blood-stained face. At this he opened his eyes for an instant, and looked up into Mrs. Carter's face with a smile of languid gratitude, and then, closing them again, soon began to breathe heavily.

"He is asleep, girls; you had best leave him now to these gentlemen and myself. The doctor will soon be here, I hope. When did you reach the city, Mr. Frobisher?" asked she, in a sick-room whisper, turning to Charley.

"To-day. On a little b-b-b-business. Who is our friend?" And he nodded towards the bed.

"Oh, I'll let the girls tell you when you go downstairs. It is rather a long and strange story."

When the doctor came he found the Don in a heavy sleep and decided to make no examination into his injuries, till he awoke. So he lay, just as he was, in his clothes, till eleven o'clock, at which time he began to exhibit symptoms of returning consciousness; and we sent off for the doctor again.

Mrs. Carter, Charley, and I sat in the room with him, though one or the other of us frequently left his side to convey tidings of his condition to the girls, who were naturally anxious to know how matters were going with him. A little after eleven, after turning uneasily from side to side for some time, he awoke. Mrs. Carter arose softly, and going to the bedside and leaning over him, asked if he wanted anything; and he called for a glass of water. He barely moistened his lips, however, and then, looking from one to another of us in a bewildered way, and scanning the room with feverish eyes, he raised his head from the pillow and asked, with a puzzled look, "Where am I?"

"Never mind," said Mrs. Carter, gently; "you are among friends."

"Ah, thanks!" said he; and his head falling back upon the pillow, he was silent for a little while. "I have been hurt somehow, have I not?" he asked, at last.

"Yes, you were hurt trying to save others."

"Oh, yes! It seems to me that I tried to stop a run-

away team, but they knocked me down and went on. Or did not some one else stop them? I remember seeing the ladies leap out and one of them fell, and there was a crowd of people, and some of them lifted me up."

"Yes, and brought you in here; but you mustn't talk."

"Well, I won't talk any more," said he, closing his eyes.

"That's right. Lie quietly where you are, and after a while you will go to bed and have a good night's rest, and will wake up strong in the morning."

"Oh, yes," said he, "I shall be all right in the morning." But, opening his eyes wide, he began to stare around the room. "Where am I? This is not my room," said he, with rather a wild look; and he tried to rise on his elbow, but fell back with an expression of pain on his face, closed his eyes, and lay motionless for a little while. Presently he opened them again. "I don't know this room!" And his eyes ranged up and down and from face to face with a sort of glare. Mrs. Carter gave us an anxious look. She arose, and, drawing her chair alongside the bed, began passing her fingers through his hair. Immediately the wild look passed out of his eyes, and his face was suffused with a smile of infantile sweetness.

"You must keep quiet," said Mrs. Carter.

"Yes," said he, simply.

Suddenly he started up with staring eyes, and cried out, "There they come! There they come! Molly! Take Laura! Molly! Quick! Quick! Get out of the way! Ah! I missed 'em!" and he fell back with a groan.

Just then the doctor entered. Mrs. Carter touched her head.

"That's nothing!" replied the doctor, in a cheery voice. He was a large man, with a large head, covered not so much with auburn hair as with a tawny mane. His face, too, was leonine in its strength, and his step light and springy; and he came into a sick-room with an air which seemed to say that when he entered by the door disease had to fly out by the way of the win-

dow, or else he would know the reason why. He walked straight up to the sufferer and placed his hand upon his forehead. The Don gave him a perplexed look, which passed away, however, when the doctor began to feel his pulse. The firm and confident look of the doctor seemed to give the patient control of his faculties.

"Your head aches?"

"Badly."

"Of course. Any pain elsewhere?"

"Whenever I move there are excruciating pains in my right side."

"We must look into that. Mrs. Carter, you will please retire. By the way, please send me one of Mr. Carter's night-shirts. We will now undress you," said he to the Don, "and see what's wrong with that right side of yours. Then we shall tuck you away snugly in bed, and you will wake up to-morrow a new man."

"Thanks," said the Don, smiling in sympathy with the cheerful tone of his physician.

The examination over, the doctor wrote his prescriptions, and, before taking his leave, suggested that one of us should sit up with the patient, as his flightiness was likely to return during the night, while the other made himself comfortable on a lounge till he was needed as a relief. Giving us his final directions, he left the room; but no sooner had he emerged into the upper hall than he was surrounded by Mrs. Carter and the three girls, Mary having decided to pass the night with her friends.

"Is he badly hurt?"

"Yes, badly."

"Dangerously?"

"His body is black and blue; there is an ugly lump on the back of his head, and—"

"And what?"

"He has three ribs broken."

"Oh!" cried the girls in unison.

"Do you think, doctor," asked Lucy, with trembling lips, "he will—" but she could not speak the word.

"Not a bit of it," and the doctor snapped his fingers.

"Oh, I am so thankful!"

"Now be off to bed, every one of you!" said the doctor, with a certain jolly imperiousness. "Scamper!" And he shook his tawny mane. "No doubt there are plenty of fellows who would gladly die for you, but I intend to pull this one through. Good-night. Go and dream of the hero. Of course you are all in love with him. Good-night." And with a courtly bow he took his leave.

CHAPTER XII.

A FEW days after this, when Mrs. Carter entered the Don's room, before going down to breakfast, to see how he was getting on, she found him entirely free from fever and his head clear once more. It was then that, for the first time, she made him understand that the house in which he was lying was the one in front of which he had so often met little Laura.

"You must know we have often played the spy upon you from our window while you were talking to her."

"Indeed!" said he, coloring. "You must have thought—"

"We thought none the worse of you, I can assure you."

"How strange my conduct must have appeared to you! But had you only known—however—" And he suddenly checked himself.

"Do you know that your condition has been critical?" said she, changing the subject. "During the first few days we were very uneasy about you."

"Few days! You don't mean to say that I have been lying here several days?"

"Yes; the accident occurred on Saturday, and this is Thursday morning."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes; but you have been delirious, and of course could know nothing of the lapse of time. You can imagine what our feelings were, doubtful as we were

as to the result of your injuries. There you lay, suffering from possibly fatal injuries, while, owing to the disordered condition of your brain, we could in no possible way learn from you the address of your friends,—you remember, Mr. Frobisher,—nor write them of your condition.” The Don’s face grew clouded, as Charley’s quick eyes perceived; but Mrs. Carter’s being fixed upon Charley for the moment, she did not remark the change. (I was getting a nap in an adjoining room.) “I am sure,” continued she, “I cannot explain why I felt so, for I did all I could, even insisting, one night, when the doctor pronounced your condition exceedingly critical, upon Mr. Frobisher’s looking through your pockets for letters or other sources of information; but I could not help repeating and repeating to myself, What will his mother say when she learns that we— Ah, you are suffering again. Well, we must not talk any more just now. You will be better after breakfast. You can take some breakfast, can you not? No? But I shall send up some toast, may I not? Yes? Ah, that’s right. It will do you good; and little Laura shall be allowed now to pay you the visit she has so often begged for.”

“Little Laura! Ah, send her in right now,—do, please.”

Charley went to the door and called her, and soon her little feet were heard pattering along the hall; but reaching the door, and seeing the Don lying in bed, and so pale and scarred, she stood abashed and hesitating upon the threshold, with one rosy finger in her mouth.

“Come in, little Sunbeam,” said he; and she began to advance slowly—a step and then a halt—till she reached the middle of the room, when with a bound and a bright smile she sprang towards him, crying, “Here’s some flowers I brought you. I saw those bad horses run over you, and I cwied.”

“Did you?” said he, with a grateful smile. “I believe you are the best friend I have in the world.” And he took her hands in his and patted them gently. “Have you had your breakfast?”

"No, ma'am; Molly is going to get me some."

"Won't you take your breakfast in here with me? We'll have a nice time together."

"Oh, may I take my breakfast with Don Miff?"

"Yes, darling." And Laura skipped out of the room. "You cannot imagine," continued Mrs. Carter, smiling, "how all of us were puzzled by that name which Laura has just used,—Don Miff. She came in one evening and said that that was your name; and do you know we were all so stupid that we could not imagine what was the English of it till Mr. Whacker met you and told us. 'Don,' you will observe, has a decidedly Spanish air; but what nationality did 'Miff' indicate?"

"Don Miff, Don Miff," repeated he, smiling. "Well, that has a decidedly droll sound when seriously spoken as a man's name. And Mr. Whacker told you that it was, being interpreted, plain John Smith."

"Yes; and, by the way, it occurs to me that perhaps you would like to know who I am. I am Mrs. Carter" (the Don tried to bow), "and that gentleman seated by the window, who has nursed you so faithfully" (Charley arose), "is Mr. Charles Frobisher, of Leicester County."

Charley came forward and extended his hand.

"Mr. Charles Frobisher!" echoed the Don, in a startled tone, giving Charley a quick and concentrated glance; and then, as if recovering himself, he took the proffered hand, and said, "Ah, Mr. Frobisher, I am extremely indebted to you."

"Not at all," replied Charley. "I could not do too much for one who saved the lives, as you doubtless did, of three of my friends."

"May I ask whom I so fortunately saved, as you are so good as to say?"

"In the first place, Mrs. Carter's daughter Alice."

"My only child," added Mrs. Carter, averting her face.

"And with her was Miss Lucy Poythress, daughter of a valued neighbor of mine."

"Little Laura's sister," explained Mrs. Carter.

"Yes," said the Don, with his eyes fixed upon the ceiling.

"And my friend Jack Whacker, whom I have long—in default of other—looked upon as a younger brother. So you see that when we come to speak of obligation, the boot is on the other—"

"Don Miff, here tums Molly with my bekfuss," chirped little Laura, skipping into the room.

"Ah," said Mrs. Carter, rising, "I must send you yours, Mr. Smith. Mr. Frobisher, you may leave your patient to Molly and Laura; so join us at breakfast. No; we will let Mr. Whacker sleep after his vigils as long as he can. Now, Laura, you must take good care of Mr. Smith."

That morning Mary, as was her wont, came across the street to inquire after the Don, and found the family lingering around the breakfast-table; and the girls had hastened to tell her of the improved condition of the patient. Mr. Carter and Charley had lit their pipes, and there was a lively clatter of female voices.

"Girls," said Mrs. Carter, rising, "I am going upstairs now to look after our invalid, and I think I shall have some news for you when I come down."

"I can't imagine what you expect to ascertain," said Alice, "unless it be how many slices of toast Mary's starry-eyed one has consumed."

"You see," continued Mrs. Carter, smiling, "it is proper, now that he has recovered the use of his faculties, to write to his friends to let them know where and how he is. They must be terribly uneasy, whoever they are. But I cannot write to them without first learning of him their names and addresses. Do you see?"

"Capital! and perfectly legitimate," cried Alice. "And mind, mother, just so soon as he gives you the names find an excuse—you will need pen, ink, and paper, you know—find an excuse and fly to us,—yes, *fly*, and tell us all about it. Don't write the letters first, for we shall be positively dying to know who he is. Now mind, mother dear, *fly*!"

Charley rose hastily, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and laid it on the mantel-piece.

"Won't you fill up?" said Mr. Carter.

"Not just at present," said Charley, looking at Mrs. Carter.

"Very well," said Mrs. Carter, "I shall fly," and she looked down at her plump figure and laughed; "and do try to live till I get back."

"May I accompany you?" asked Charley.

There were three little shrieks from the girls.

"Talk about a woman's curiosity," exclaimed Alice; and they all lifted up their hands and let them fall upon the table. Charley, who was just passing out into the hall, turned and smiled. It was the answer that he returned to most things that were said to him.

"By the way," said Mrs. Carter, turning round in the hall, "when I come to think of it, Mr. Frobisher, it seems to me that it would be as well for you to offer your services instead of me." And she re-entered the dining-room.

Charley stood looking down upon the floor and twirling his thumbs.

"Don't you think so?"

"Will you allow me to be perfectly frank?" said Charley, looking up.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Carter, with a surprised look; "what is your opinion?"

"That neither of us ask the names and addresses of his friends."

"Really? Of course, if you have any reason to think—if you know anything—"

"I know nothing whatever, but—"

"But what?" gasped the girls.

Charley stood silent for a time, stroking his yellow beard.

"Sphinx No. 2," said Alice.

A gentle ripple passed through Charley's moustache. He began to twist one end of it. "It may be all imagination," he began, "but I fancied, at least, that when you spoke to him this morning of his mother—" And he paused.

"Ah, I remember. I recollect a look of pain. Yes,

I remember perfectly,—his face clouded up instantly. Yes, you are quite right, Mr. Frobisher."

"He always is," whispered Lucy to me, with a smile.

"Always," said I.

Mary gave a sigh. "Now, girls, I suppose we are never to learn who this Sphinx is."

"Never, never on earth," sighed Alice, in return.

"Yes," said Lucy, "we shall yet know him; I feel that we shall."

"You always were a dear, encouraging creature," said Alice, passing her arm round Lucy's waist and leaning her head languidly upon her shoulder. "I shall never forgive you, Mr. Frobisher. By this time, but for you—oh, it was too cruel!"

"Never despair!" And he started on his way upstairs.

Nothing was said for a minute or so, all listening to Charley's retiring footsteps.

"Mrs. Carter," said Mary, "Mr. Frobisher knows something about the Don that we do not. Don't you think so, Mr. Whacker?"

I had come in for my breakfast shortly after Mary arrived, looking very sleepy and stupid.

"Hardly, I should think. How could he?"

"And then," said Mary, "if he knew anything he would have told Mr. Whacker."

"I am not so sure of that."

"You don't know him," said Lucy, laughing. "He is an odd fish if ever there was one. I never could see, though, Mr. Whacker, why people should say he was a woman-hater."

"A woman-hater!" exclaimed Mary, looking much interested; "a regular misogynist would be such a piquant character!"

"Yes, I have heard that he was. Is it true, Mr. Whacker?" said Alice.

"Charley a woman-hater!" said I, sleepily reaching for the butter. "No—more—than—I—am." And I gave a frightful yawn.

"Ever since I was a child," said Alice, gravely, "I have longed to see Mammoth Cave. My curiosity is

now gone. I hope your appetite is on the same scale, Mr. Whacker."

"You must excuse me. Remember how little I slept last night."

"It is such a disappointment that he doesn't hate women!" said Mary.

"Romance!" whispered Alice; for which Mary gave her a love-tap on the cheek.

"Charley, you must know, is an eccentric, and it is of the nature of eccentricities to grow, especially when remarked upon. He was, even as a boy, singularly taciturn, and this trait having been often alluded to by his acquaintance, I think he has grown rather proud of it. Rarely opening his mouth, when he does speak his language is apt to assume a sententious and epigrammatic form; and certain of his crisp utterances about women having been repeated, have given him the reputation of hating the sex. This for example: *Few ladies are gentlemen*. I suppose, too, that the manner of his life has contributed to strengthen this impression. He never visits young ladies, seeming content with the society of my grandfather and that of two or three of the elderly people among his neighbors."

"Why, yes," interposed Lucy, "if he hated women, how could he be so devoted to mother as he is? No weather can prevent his crossing the river for his weekly visits to her."

"How fond he must be of your mother!" said Mary, with an arch look.

"Oh," replied Lucy, quietly, "I am not the attraction, though we are warm friends. His visits began when I was ever so little; and as for mother, she loves Mr. Frobisher as dearly as though he were her own son. But you know," said she, turning to me with a grave look, and speaking in undertones, "there are peculiar reasons for that."

"Yes," said I, "I have heard."

Lucy sighed and was silent.

"But, Mr. Whacker," began Alice, "why is he so silent? You can see he is very intelligent. His smile is singularly subtle, and what little he does say is always

admirably well said. 'A bird that can sing and won't,' you know."

"Suppose you bring him out," said I.

"Do you know I am positively afraid of him?"

"The idea of being afraid of Mr. Frobisher!" exclaimed Lucy.

"And the idea of Alice's being afraid of any one!" chimed in Mary.

"But I am," rejoined Alice. "That way he has of quietly fixing his eyes upon you while you are talking, as though he were serenely looking you through and through, quite upsets me. And then you can't for the life of you guess what he thinks of you."

"Ah," said I, "that's the trouble, is it? You would like to know what he thinks of you?"

"I didn't say that," said she, slightly coloring. "I—"

"I'll ask him," said I.

"I said—"

"But he won't tell me, I know."

"What I said—"

"Sly rogue that he is, with his eyes fixed upon you—so I understood you to say—all the time that you—even *you*—are talking. How great a portion of his time he—"

"Mr. Whacker, you are too absurd for anything!"

"However," said I, unwilling to tease her further, though I saw what delight it gave her mother and Mary to see Alice put, for once, on the defensive, "you do my friend injustice. I assure you that, seated quietly in the Elmington sitting-room, before a bright winter fire, alone with my grandfather and me, Charley is capable of becoming a veritable chatterbox. When he is in the vein, there seems to be no end to the stream of his quaint, subdued humor. He reminds me of the waters of a cistern, deep, quiet, unobtrusive, but there when needed,—not of a brook that goes babbling sweetly forever."

"For example," said Mrs. Carter, nodding towards Alice.

"I wish you would persuade him to do some babbling for us," said she.

"And you, meanwhile?"

"Ah," said her mother, "she would be able then to enjoy the luxury of what Sydney Smith called an occasional flash of silence."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE Don now went on improving steadily, and it was not very long before his jolly doctor, entering the room in his brisk, cheery way, and bringing along with him much of the freshness of the crisp October morning, told his patient that he might dress and sit by the window, and that if he felt able to do so, he might, the next day, go down-stairs. At this Mrs. Carter, who had followed the doctor, expressed great satisfaction; when the Don said something about having given enough trouble already, and asked whether he would not be strong enough, probably, to go down to his own room.

"How far is it?" asked the doctor. "Where is your room?"

"At the corner of ——th and Main; ever so far," said Mrs. Carter; "but far or near, Mr. Smith, you will not go there yet. It is simply out of the question." To which the Don smiled his acknowledgments.

I must mention, here, that after the conversation recorded in the last chapter, on Mrs. Carter's going up to inquire how the Don had enjoyed his breakfast, he had seemed a little nervous. It was obvious—so, at least, she thought—that he feared that she was going to propose to write to his friends. At last it seemed to occur to him, as a kind of compromise, that he would give a vague sort of account of himself, but in such a way that it would be understood that he had nothing more to report. Actuated, apparently, by this motive, and spurred on by a nervous dread of a point-blank question from Mrs. Carter, he seized every pretext for saying something about himself, but always in a distant and shadowy

kind of way. For example, allusion having been made to the news from Europe, he hastened to say that he had spent much of his life there; and this bringing up, very naturally, the delights of travelling, "Yes," said he, "it is very pleasant at first, but after a while one begins to feel, as he wanders from capital to capital, that he is on a sort of perpetual picnic,—a mere butterfly,—and a weary sense of the aimlessness, the utter worthlessness, of his life begins to creep over him. After all, every human heart feels, sooner or later, the need of a home; for a home means interests, means duties, means affections; and what is life without all these?"

It was a study, watching his face when he spoke in this way. Beginning with a low voice and with a studied repose of manner, the mere utterance of his thoughts would soon hurry him past self-control, the glow of his countenance and the vibrating intensity of his voice breaking through the crust of a self-imposed calm, when, as though conscious that he had betrayed too much emotion, he would abruptly cease speaking, and remain silent till he felt that he had regained composure.

"I cannot thank you sufficiently, Mr. Frobisher," said Mrs. Carter one day, "for warning me not to ask him about his home and friends."

"What *would* he have said, mother?" said Alice. "I wish you had, *almost*."

"And then, perhaps, we might have known something," said Mary. "I declare I am positively consumed with curiosity."

"Don't speak of it," said Alice. "Now just look at that provoking Lucy. Here are you and I, Mary, wrought up to the highest pitch of excitement over this enigma, and there sits Lucy, as composed and self-contained as—as—Neptune. You remember his *placidum caput*, girls,—in the Virgil class, you know."

"My head may be *placidum*, but it is more than my heart is. It fairly aches with longing to know who he is. Do you know, I feel, somehow, as though he was to be more to me than to either of you girls."

"What!" said Alice. "Have not I long since claimed him?"

It was on one of the occasions above alluded to that the Don mentioned where his room was (hence Mrs. Carter's knowledge of its location), managing to throw out, in a vague way, that as a wanderer about the earth he had chanced to find himself in Richmond, something in his manner rendering it impossible that any one should ask whence he came or whither he was going. "Now, doctor," Mrs. Carter had added on this occasion, "I am sure that you will say that it would be very unwise in Mr. Smith to forsake his nurse and his present quarters just at present. True, Mr. Whacker takes Mr. Frobisher off to-night down to his rooms, but I am left. Besides, down there on Main Street, weak as you are, and all alone as you would be, there is no telling what might happen." And she looked to the doctor for support.

"Of course," said he, with a shake of his head that brought the waving hair down over his forehead,—*"of course Mr. Smith will remain here for the present."*

"Well, that is settled?" asked Mrs. Carter.

"One must obey orders, especially when they are agreeable."

CHAPTER XIV.

THIS decree of the doctor's threw the household into a great bustle. I was requested to call on the Don's landlord, explain his long absence, and have his trunk sent up to Leigh Street. The girls were in a great flutter at the prospect of breakfasting with the mysterious stranger next morning; which announcement they had no sooner heard than they flew across the street to give Mary the news; and the air grew misty with interjections.

"We have arranged it all, Mary. Mr. Whacker and Mr. Frobisher, who, as you know, are to leave our house this evening, will come up to breakfast with the Don,

of course, and you will just make the party complete. *Proper?* Of course, Mary. Why, there will be just one apiece,—so nice! You and Mr. Frobisher, Lucy and—ahem!—Mr. Whacker, and the Don and myself. *No!* that's the way it shall be. Of course I'll let you girls look at him,—even exchange a few words with him,—but I!—” And dropping into a chair by a table, she made as though mincing at an imaginary breakfast, whilst ogling, most killingly, an invisible gallant by her side.

That day, the girls thought, would never end. They could neither talk nor think of anything save the coming breakfast, wandering aimlessly from room to room, and from story to story, romping, yawning, giggling, and were so exhausted by nightfall that they all went to bed at an early hour, just as children do on Christmas Eve, to make the morning come sooner.

You must remember that they were hardly eighteen years of age.

The morning came. Charley and I met Mary at the front door and we entered together. “I am so excited,” said she. “It is all so like a real adventure.”

A few minutes afterwards Mrs. Carter begged me to go up and assist the Don down-stairs, if necessary. He walked down-stairs very well, however, and we entered the dining-room, where I expected to find the whole family, but the girls had not yet put in an appearance. Alice, it seems, had gotten the other girls into so hilarious a state by her mad drolleries—enacting scenes that were to take place between herself and the Don—that they had to remain some time in the upper chambers in order to resume control of their countenances; and her performances in the halls and on the stairways were such that they had to call a halt several times before they reached the dining-room door. We were all seated at the table, and breakfast had begun, when the door was partly opened, then nearly closed, then opened a little way again, while a faint rustling of female garments was the only sound that broke the stillness. Presently, Mary, followed by Lucy, popped into the room with a suddenness that suggested a vigorous push from some

one in the rear, while their features, of necessity instantly composed, were in that state of unstable equilibrium which may be observed in the faces of boys when the teacher reappears in the school-room after a few moments' absence. Alice followed, demure as a Quakeress.

The introductions over, and Alice and Lucy having thanked the Don for his gallant rescue of them from danger, the girls took their seats, Alice next the Don. It will be easily imagined that, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, no word, no gesture, no look of our new friend passed unobserved. No bride, coming among her husband's relations, was ever more searchingly scrutinized. Naturally, we compared notes upon the first occasion that offered, and it was interesting to observe that, various as were the estimates placed upon our enigma, each of the ladies held, in the main, to her first impression. It is no secret, in fact, that if a woman sees a man passing in front of a window at which she is sitting, or hears him utter three sentences, the impression formed upon her mind is often next to ineradicable.

"I do not know," said Mrs. Carter, "when I have seen a manner so elegant and distinguished. It shows the combined effect of gentle birth and much travel. How charming—and how rare nowadays—is that deference towards our sex that he manages to combine with perfect dignity and repose of manner! By the way, Mr. Whacker, did you not notice how subdued Alice was throughout breakfast? I have never seen her so quiet and demure."

"Never mind," said Alice, "I am feeling my way. Wait till I get a little better acquainted with him. I must say, however, that I don't think our hero promises much in the way of fun. I doubt whether he would know a joke if he met one on the highway."

"No," said Mary, "his nature is too absorbed, too intense, for—"

"And his eyes too starry. Did you not observe, Mary, how they dilated when first they bended their light on the dish of stewed oysters?"

"Alice, I believe that if you could, you would jest at your own funeral."

"No; at that pageant you may count on me as chief mourner."

"Oh, Alice!" said Lucy, reprovingly.

"Never mind, my dear; I am not so wicked as I seem. Besides, I am rather reckless and desperate just at this moment."

"Why, what is the matter?"

"All my aspirations dashed to the ground during one short breakfast!" Alice rested her chin upon her hand, and gazed pensively upon the floor.

"What new farce is this?" asked Lucy, amused.

"And it is you who ask me that!" And Alice raised her eyes with a sad, reproachful look to those of her friend. "And you call it a farce? *You!*" And she sighed. "Of course," resumed Alice, quickly raising her head and looking from face to face,—*"of course you all noticed it. It was perfectly obvious. Yes, this Miss from the rural districts has swooped down and carried off the prey without an effort."*

"I, at least," said Lucy, coloring, *"saw nothing of the kind. In the first place, I sat at one end of the table and he at the other, and I am sure I hardly exchanged a dozen words with him."*

"Alas!" sighed Alice, *"it is precisely there that the sting lies. I sat by him and had every advantage over you,—and I used every advantage. Didn't you remark the tone in which I called his attention to the omelet? Could a siren have urged upon him, more seductively, a second cup of coffee? And how gently did I strive to overwhelm his soul with buckwheat cakes! And was the marmalade sweeter than the murmur in which I recommended it? And yet,"—Alice paused for a lull in the tumultuous laughter,—*"and yet,"* she continued, *"strive as I would, I could not keep his eyes from wandering to your end of the table."**

"It is very strange," said Lucy, wiping her eyes, *"that all this was lost on me."*

"And then," added Alice, *"your most—some one will please attend to the fat lady; she seems in a fit—your*

most trivial remark, even though not addressed to him, seemed to rivet his attention. To confess the humiliating truth, Mary, I don't believe he would recognize either of us, should he meet us in the street; but every lineament of Lucy's face is graven—you know how they say it in novels. It is a regular case of love at first sight, my dear."

Alice's eyes ran along the circle of faces surrounding her as she spoke, and it so happened that when she paused at the words "my dear" she was looking Charley full in the face. Charley, as I have before remarked, had seen very little of young ladies, and I had several times observed that when Alice was speaking in her sparkling way he would watch her all the while out of the corners of his eyes, with an expression of wondering interest. Charley rarely laughed. I think his self-control in this regard amounted to somewhat of an affectation, and he had acquired a sort of serene moderation even in his smiles. But Alice's bright, rattling talk seemed to have a sort of fascination for him, and to hurry him out of himself, as it were. And on this occasion I had been slyly watching his features moving in sympathy with the changing expression of her exceedingly mobile countenance. Entirely absorbed as he was in watching the play of her countenance, and thinking of I know not what, when he found her bright eyes resting full upon him, and himself seemingly addressed as "my dear," he was suddenly startled out of his revery, and not knowing what to say:

"I beg pardon," said he, quickly, "were you speaking to me?"

A shout of laughter greeting this ingenuous question, Charley's face reddened violently, Alice's generally imperturbable countenance answering with a reflected glow.

"Not exactly," said she; "my remarks were addressed to the company at large."

"Oh!" said he, blushing more deeply still.

"But, Mr. Frobisher," continued Alice, willing to relieve the embarrassment of the woman-hater, "don't

you agree with me? Wasn't the Don obviously captivated by Lucy?"

"I am sure, if he was not, it would be hard to understand the reason why. But the fact is, Mrs. Carter's capital breakfast—"

"Oh, you monster!"

Half an hour later, finding myself alone with Lucy: "So you do not claim or even admit," I happened casually to remark, "that you have made a conquest."

"No, indeed!" replied she, with a frank look in her eyes. "Far from it. Alice is all wrong."

"But Miss Alice was not alone in her observation of the facts of the case. We all saw what she described. I did most certainly."

"And so did I."

"Well?"

"I saw, of course, how often he glanced towards me, and I was conscious that even while I was speaking to others his eyes were upon me. But there are looks and looks. You men don't understand anything about such matters."

"And where, pray, did you learn all this mysterious language of looks and looks?"

"I am a woman."

"So is Alice."

"Ah, yes; but, Alice—well, girls like to say that kind of thing to each other,—it's encouraging, you know. Why do you smile? It is pleasant, of course, to be told that we have destroyed some man's peace of mind, though we know it to be highly improbable in point of fact. I shall reciprocate, at the first opportunity, by telling Alice with what sweet pain she has filled the breast of dear good Mr. Frobisher."

"Do you think so?" I exclaimed. "That would be too good! The woman-hater! Capital!"

"Stranger things have happened. Did you not see how he blushed just now? But as to the Don, do you know he is a greater mystery to me now than ever? Every woman instinctively knows what a man's looks mean."

"Well, what did the Don's glances signify?"

"I cannot for the life of me imagine."

"What! Although every woman instinctively knows, and so forth."

"Ah," said she, smiling, "I meant that they always knew when the looks meant—pshaw! you know very well what I mean."

"You would have me to understand that the Don's looks, though they meant something, did not mean nascent love."

"Yes. Do you not remember that sudden and intense look he gave me when we met him on the sidewalk? Well, when I came to turn that incident over in my mind I came to the conclusion that he mistook me for some one else. Now I am all at sea again. He knows, now, that I am Lucy Poythress, and not any one else."

"Naturally."

"Don't be silly,—and still—"

"And still?"

"And yet—oh, you know what I mean."

"Upon my word I do not."

"Well, he seemed to me to be studying me as a kind of problem,—no, not that,—he appeared—ah, this is my idea—he seemed to me to survey me just as I have seen mothers look at their sons after a session's absence. 'Has he grown? Has he changed? Has he improved?' Do I make myself clear?"

"Perfectly."

"What are you laughing at? What do I mean, then?"

"I gather from all you say that your impression is that this Mystery, this Enigma, this Sphinx, this Don Miff—longs to be a mother to you."

"Mr. W-h-a-c-k-e-r!"

I could never understand why a man must not laugh at his own witticisms; and my hilarity on this occasion immediately drew the other girls and Mrs. Carter into the front parlor, where Lucy and I were sitting. By rapidly interposing a succession of chairs between that young woman and myself, I succeeded in giving the ladies an enlarged and profusely illustrated edition

of Lucy's views of the state of the Don's feelings and intentions in regard to herself, when, seizing my hat, I fled, leaving the three girls in uproarious glee, and Mrs. Carter collapsed in an arm-chair, weeping, while voiceless laughter rippled along her rotund form. As I passed in front of the window Lucy's head appeared.

"Say your prayers twice to-night," said she.

CHAPTER XV.

"JACK," said Charley that night at my rooms, "have you any message for the old gentleman? I am off for home to-morrow."

"Indeed! Why this sudden resolution?"

"Too many people in Richmond for me."

"It seems to me that you like some of them a good deal. Isn't she bright?"

"P-p-p-pass me the tobacco." He filled his pipe very deliberately and walked across the room. "Where do you keep your matches? Ah, here they are. Who," added he, striking one—"puff—do you—puff, puff—think so—puff, puff, puff—bright? Confound the thing!—puff—puff—it has gone out!" And he struck another. Lighting his pipe, and throwing himself upon a lounge, he looked the picture of content.

"Say, old boy," said I, "own up. Those hazel eyes—"

"Do you know, Jack-Whack" (whenever he called me that he was in the best possible humor), "that you are making a howling ass of yourself?" And he shot a pillar of smoke straight towards the ceiling, following its eddying curves with contemplative eyes.

"'Howling ass' is a mixed metaphor."

"Yes, but an unmixed truth, my boy. Did it ever occur to you, Jack," said he, removing the Powhatan pipe, with its reed-root stem, from his lips, "that cigars are essentially vulgar? You never thought of it? But they are. So are dress-coats. You have only to

put them into marble to see it. Look at the statue of Henry Clay in the Square. Was ever anything so absurd! Posterity will inevitably regard Henry as an ass."

"Of the howling variety?"

"Of course. Now, just picture to yourself Phidias' Jove with a cigar stuck into his mouth."

Charley shot upwards a circling wreath of smoke, watched it till it dissipated itself, and then turned his head, with a little jerk, towards me: "H'm? How would the Olympian Zeus look with a Parian Partaga between his ambrosial lips?"

"I have seen lips that—"

"Howling and so forth." And he turned over on his back and commenced pulling away at his pipe.

"I think she likes you."

Charley pursed up his mouth, and, taking aim, with one eye, at a spot on the ceiling, projected at it a fine-spun thread of smoke. I detected a tremor in his extended lips.

"I may say I know she likes you."

With an explosive chuckle the pucker instantly dissolved. I had taken him at a disadvantage. His features snapped back into position as suddenly as those of a rubber mask.

"I was thinking," said he, "how great a solace and bulwark a pipe would have been to Socrates, during his interviews with Xantippe,—and it made me smile."

"Yes," said I, carelessly.

"Yes!" said he, rising up on his elbow,—“what do you mean by ‘yes’?”

"I merely meant to agree with you, that a pipe would have been a great solace and bulwark to Socrates during his interviews with Xantippe."

He fell back on the lounge. "Let's go to bed," said he.

"Good!" said I; and I began to remove my coat. "So the Don is to leave the Carters' to-morrow and go to his own quarters."

"Yes," said he, rising from the lounge. "I like that chap."

That was a great deal for Charley to say. It was the very first expression of his sentiments towards the Don.

"I am glad you do," said I; "I thought you did."

"Yes, he is a man. Do you know what I am going to do? I shall invite him to Elmington. Uncle Tom will like him. He says he is fond of hunting, and this is just the time for that; and he will be strong enough soon. Suppose we go up to-morrow, before I leave town, and invite him jointly. You will be down for the Christmas holidays, you know. By the way, I hope he will accept?"

"I am quite sure of it. He has betrayed an unaccountable interest in Leicester County on every occasion that I have alluded to it, notwithstanding an obvious effort to appear indifferent. He has a way of throwing out innocent, careless little questions about the county and the people that has puzzled me not a little. Who the deuce is he?"

"Roll into that bed! it is too late for conundrums. Here goes for the light!" And he blew it out.

"Jack!" said he, about half an hour afterwards; "Jack, are you asleep?"

"H'm?"

"Are you asleep?"

"H'm? H'm? Confound it, *yes!*"

"No, you're not!"

"Well, I *was!*" And I groaned.

"Jack, I suppose Uncle Tom will have his usual Christmas party of girls and young men at Elmington this Christmas?"

"S'pose so, umgh!"

"I say—"

"Don't! Don't! Those are my ribs! Good Lord, man! you don't know how sleepy I am. What on earth are you talking about?"

"Do you know what girls Uncle Tom is going to have to spend Christmas with us this winter?"

"And you woke me up to ask me such a question as that? Thunder! And you see him to-morrow evening, too! Oh, I understand," said I, being at last fully

awake, and I burst out laughing. "You want me to say something about Alice with the merry-glancing hazel eyes."

"About whom? Alice? That's absurd,—perfectly absurd! Why, she thinks me an idiot because I don't jabber like one of you lawyers. All women do. Unless you gabble, gabble, gabble, you are a fool. They are all alike. A woman is always a woman; a man may be a philosopher."

"My dear boy, your anxieties are misplaced."

"Who spoke of anxieties?"

"Don't you—a philosopher—know that talkative girls prefer taciturn men? I am perfectly certain that Alice thinks your silence admirable,—dotes on it, in fact."

"Jack-Whack," said Charley, rising up in bed and—rare sight—though I felt rather than saw or heard it—shaking with laughter, "you are the most immeasurable, the most unspeakable, the most—"

Down came a pillow on my head. Down it came again and again as I attempted to rise. We grappled, and for a few minutes no two school-boys could have had a more boisterous romp.

"Now just look at this bed," said Charley, out of breath; "see what you have done!" And he fell back exhausted, as well with the struggle as from his unwonted laughter. "We have not had such a tussle since I used to tease you as a boy. Whew! Let's go to sleep now."

"She's a bewitching creature."

"Idiot!" said Charley, turning his back to me with a laugh, and settling himself for the night.

"Poor fellow! Well, he got me to pronounce her name, at any rate, by his manœuvring."

"Do you know this is rather coolish? Where on earth are the blankets? Find one, won't you? and throw it over me."

"Here they are, on the floor! There! Sleep well, poor boy!

'Oh don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt?
Sweet Alice with h-a-i-r so brown.'

"You rhyme with the sinners who came to scoff, but remained to pray. You seem to yourself to sing, but appear to me to b-b-b-bray."

"Good! There is life in the old boy yet!"

CHAPTER XVI.

NEXT morning Charley and I called at the Carters' to give the Don the invitation to visit Elmington, but found he had gone out for his first walk since his accident, to test, at Mrs. Carter's instance, his strength before going into his own quarters. Charley was compelled, therefore, to leave the city without seeing him. In the evening I called at his rooms. Knocking at his sitting-room door, I was invited to enter, and found him sitting by a table reading a small book, which he closed, but held in his hand as he rose and came forward to greet me.

"Reading?" began I, bowing and glancing casually towards the little book, the back of which was turned away from me.

"Yes," replied he, but without looking at the book; "getting through an evening alone I find rather dull work after my recent charming experience. Take a seat. Will you have a pipe, or do you prefer a cigar? A pipe? You will find the tobacco very good." And walking to a small set of shelves near the door, he placed the little book upon it,—a circumstance too trivial to mention, did it not afford a characteristic example of the quiet but effectual way the Don had of nipping in the bud any conversation which was about to take a line he did not wish it to follow. I suppose we had been chatting for half an hour before I alluded to my errand.

"Mr. Frobisher wished to see me particularly, you say?"

"Yes; Charley heard you say one day that you were fond of shooting; and as there is fine sport to be had

in Leicester, he thought it might be agreeable to you to—”

The smile of polite curiosity with which he heard that Charley had had something to say to him rapidly faded as I spoke, and there came into his countenance a look of such intense seriousness, nay, even of subdued and suffering agitation, that, for a moment, I lost my self-possession in my surprise, but managed to finish my message in a stumbling sort of way. As for the Don, anticipating, apparently, from my opening words what that message was to be, he seemed hardly conscious that it was ended. He sat, for a moment, with his head resting in the palm of his hand, his piercing eyes fixed upon the floor; but seeming suddenly to realize that this was a queer way of meeting a courtesy, he quickly raised his head. “Thanks, thanks,” said he, with a forced smile, but with apologetic emphasis. “Charley—I beg pardon—Mr. Frobisher is very kind,—very kind indeed! Yes, I should immensely enjoy having a tilt once more at the partridges.* Very much indeed.”

“Then I may hope that you will accept?”

“Oh, certainly, with very great pleasure. Please present my warmest acknowledgments to Char—Mr. Frobisher, and say that I shall be at his command so soon as I shall have recovered my strength somewhat.” He paused for a moment; then, throwing back his head with a little laugh: “By the way,” he continued, “I beg you will not misinterpret my singular way of receiving the invitation. It was such a surprise, and I am still a little weak, you know.”

“You must allow me to add how much gratified I, too, am at your decision. You know—or do you not?—that the invitation is to my grandfather’s place, Elmington.”

“Elmington?”

“Ah, I see—very naturally, you don’t understand that Charley lives with my grandfather.”

“With your grandfather? Why, how can that be?”

* The quail is unknown in Virginia—both bird and word.—*Ed.*

I thought his place adjoined your—" And he stopped suddenly. "Please be so good as to explain," he added, in a low voice.

"Well, this rather peculiar state of things came about in this way. My mother died before I was a month old, and my father, my grandfather's only son, survived her less than a year; so that I was brought up by the old gentleman. Now, Charley's place adjoined Elmington, my grandfather's, their respective residences being not over a half-mile apart; and so Charley got into the habit—however, I must mention that Charley lost his father years ago, and, about ten years since, his mother died."

"His mother? His mother is dead?" asked the Don, in a low tone, and without raising his eyes from the floor.

"Yes. They say she was a lovely woman."

"And she is dead, you say,—your friend's mother?" he repeated, in a mechanical sort of way; and, resting his head upon his hand, he fixed his eyes upon the window with a look so grim that I paused in my narrative.

"Yes," I presently resumed, "she—Charley's mother; that is—"

"I beg pardon," said he, abruptly turning to me, and, as the Latin hath it, serenening his face with an effort,—
"please go on."

"Well, Charley was at the University at the time of his mother's death; and during the following vacation he seemed to find his own desolate home—he was singularly devoted to his mother—unendurable; so he would frequently drop in on my grandfather and myself at tea, walking home, when bedtime came, across the fields; but my grandfather, remarking the sad look that always came into his face when he arose to depart, would frequently insist upon his spending the night with us. The poor fellow could scarcely ever resist the temptation, to my great delight; for to me, a boy of thirteen, Charley, who was eighteen, and a student, was a sort of demi-god. I suppose, in fact, that apart from my grandfather's personal liking for the young man, and his sympathy with him under the circumstances, he was very glad to give me the society of

some one younger than himself. And so, to make a long story short, Charley's visits becoming more and more frequent and regular, it came at last to be understood that he was to spend every night with us,—during his vacation, of course. At last, at the end of three years, Charley left the University with the degree of Master of Arts in pocket."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. You are surprised, no doubt. He is so unassuming, one would hardly suppose that he had attained an honor which is reached by hardly more than one out of every hundred of the students at the University. To continue. When he returned from college and took charge of his farm, it soon appeared that the tables were turned. It was Charley's companionship now that had grown to be a necessity to the old gentleman. 'We shall expect you to dinner,' he would say every morning, as Charley rode off to look after his farming operations. Charley often protested against this one-sided hospitality, and, as a compromise, we would dine with him occasionally; but at last my grandfather proposed a consolidation of the two households, all of us wondering why the plan had not been thought of before. That is the way Charley came to live at Elmington. The two farms are separate, though from time to time worked in common, as occasion demands,—in harvest-time, for example. Each farm contributes its quota to the table, though not in any fixed ratio. My grandfather, for example, is firmly persuaded that the grass on his farm—notably in one special field—imparts, in some occult way, a flavor to his mutton that Charley's does not possess; while, on the other hand, an old woman on Charley's place has such a gift at raising chickens, turkeys, and ducks, that we have gotten in the habit of looking to her for our fowls."

The Don smiled.

"It is rather a singular arrangement, isn't it? but I have gone into these details that you might see that Elmington is, for all the purposes of hospitality, as much Charley's as my grandfather's. I hope it will not be long," I added, rising, "before you will be able

to go down and see how the arrangement works, though I am sorry I shall not be able to join you till Christmas week, being detained by professional engagements, or, rather, the hope of such, as I have but recently opened a law office."

"You may rest assured that I shall not lose a day, when once my physician has given me leave to go. Can't you sit longer? Another visit yet? Ah, I am sorry." And he accompanied me to the door of his sitting-room.

As we stood there for a moment, exchanging the customary civilities of leave-taking, my eye fell upon the little book the Don had laid upon a shelf of his book-case.

It was a copy of the *NEW TESTAMENT*.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT about the hour at which I was taking leave of the Don my grandfather was sitting alone in his dining-room, reading; his snow-white hair and beard, as they glistened in the lamp-light, affording a strong contrast to the vivacity of his dark eyes and the ruddy glow of his complexion. But the book before him was hardly able to fix his attention. Every now and then he would raise his eyes from its pages, with the look of one who fancied that he heard an expected sound. Several times he had risen from his seat, gone to the door, opened it, and listened. Something like this he had been doing now for nearly a week. "Dick!" called he at last, opening the door: "Dick!"

Uncle Dick emerged from the kitchen, where, for several days past, he had had orders to sit up till ten o'clock in the hope that Charley might arrive.

"Yes, mahster!"

"Dick, I thought I heard some one coming."

Uncle Dick, who very naturally (and correctly) supposed that this was another false alarm, threw his head into an attitude of pretended listening.

"Do you hear anything?" asked the old gentleman.

"Ain't dem de horses a-stompin' down at de stable?"

"I believe you are right," sighed the old gentleman, as he turned to re-enter the dining-room.

"Marse Charley ain't sent you no letter, is he?" asked Uncle Dick, advancing deferentially towards my grandfather, across the space that separated the kitchen from the "Great-House."

"Why, no; but I thought he might come. He wrote me a week ago that the gentleman was getting well."

"Adzackly!" replied Dick, scratching in the fringe of white wool that bordered his bald head. "Jess so! Does you think it rimprobable, mahster," he began again after a moment of seeming reflection, "dat Marse Charley would come without he writ fust and 'pinted de day, and de ferry 'most twenty miles from here, and nothin' to hire dere 'cep'n 'tis dat old flea-bitten gray, and he a-string-halted?"

"True enough."

"Dat ain't no fitten animil for de likes o' Marse Charley, and he a-used to straddlin' o' de very best dat steps."

"But listen, Dick! what's that?"

"Lor', mahster, dat ain't nothin' but de old m'yar and colt out d'yar in de pasture."

"Well, what in the blue-blazes makes them all stamp so to-night?" replied the old gentleman, not without a little petulance.

"Dat's jess what I say! leastwise d'yar ain't no flies to bite 'em dis weather; but dey will do it, mahster, dey will do it. Every dog have he day, dey tell me."

Uncle Dick was strong on proverbs, though hardly happy in their application. Sometimes, in fact, just as doctors will, when they don't know what is the matter with a patient, prescribe pills of several remedial agents, in the hope that if one shall miss another may hit, so our old hostler, carriage-driver, and dining-room servant would not scruple, when aiming at a truth, to let fly at it an aphorism compound of the head of one proverb and the tail of another.

"Yes," said my grandfather, applying Dick's saying for him, "every dog will have his day, and I suppose

that is why your Marse Charles is staying so long in Richmond."

Uncle Dick was a year or two his master's senior, and many a "wrassle" had they had together as boys. He was, of course, a privileged character, and he now gave one of those low chuckles beyond the reach of the typographer's art to represent to the eye. "Yes, mahster, I hears 'em say dat d'yar is some monstrous pretty gals, nebberdeless I should say young ladies, up d'yar in Richmond. Howsomever, pretty is as pretty does. Dat's what old Dick tells 'em."

"You think Charley is in love, I presume?"

Old Dick drew himself up as became one consulted on family affairs, and, dropping his head on one side, he assumed, with his knitted brows and pursed lips, an eminently judicial air.

"Well, mahster, ef you axes me 'bout dat, I couldn't 'espond pint'ly, in course; for I ain't seen Marse Charles a-noratin' of it and a-splanifyin' amongst de Richmond f'yar sect; but old Dick ain't been a-wrasslin' and a-spyin' 'round in dis here vain world for nigh on to a hundred year for nothin' ef you listen to Dick; and ef you believes me, mahster, dey all of 'em most inginerally gits tetched with love onetimeornuther."

"I believe you are quite right, Dick."

"Why, Lor' me, mahster," began Dick, encouraged, and assuming an attitude worthy of the vast generalization he was about to utter, "I really do believe into my soul dat people is born so; dey is pint'ly, —specially young folks." And he stopped in mid-career. "What dat? 'Pear like I hear de far gate slam. But Marse Charley, he are a keener, he are, and the gal what catches him will have to be a keener too, she will pint'ly. Marse Charley worse'n a oyster at low tide; soon as a young 'oman begins a-speculatin' and a-gallivantin' round him, he shets up, he do." And the old man chuckled. "Howsomever, he am pint'ly a keener, ef you hear Dick—"

"Listen, Dick!"

"I do believe I hear a horse snort! D'yar 'tis again! Somebody comin' through de gate. 'Fore de Lord, I

believe 'tis Marse Charley! Lemme look good! Sure enough, d'yar he is! Sarvant, Marse Charles! I knowed you was a-comin' dis very night, and I hope I may die ef he ain't on old Hop-and-go-fetch-it! Lord a' massy! Lord a' massy! Well, it's an ill wind what don't blow de crows out o' some gent'mun's cornfield. Lord a' massy, Marse Charley, what is you a-doin' up d'yar on dat poor old critter, and de horses in de stable jess a-spilin' to have somebody fling he leg over 'em?"

"Well, my boy, is that you?"

"Yes, here I am again, and glad to be back at home. How are you, Uncle Tom?"

"The same old seven-and-sixpence,—always well; and how are you?"

"Sound in wind and limb, and savagely hungry."

"Well, get down, and we'll soon cure that ailment."

"I am very sorry," said Charley, as they entered the dining-room, "that I had to stay away so long, but it seemed right that I should help nurse him. Ah, what a noble fire!"

"Well, you are at home again, at any rate. Polly will soon have some supper for you, and you know what is in the sideboard."

Old Dick, meanwhile, was carrying out his share in the programme.

"Well, I s'pose I'll have to feed you," said he to the flea-bitten, surveying him from head to hock.

No true negro feels any doubt whatever as to his words being perfectly intelligible to horse, mule, cow, or dog.

"Ef ever I see a poor-folks' horse, you is one. Git up! git up! don't you hear me? You needn't be a-standin' here a-thinkin' Dick gwine to ride you to de stable. Aha! you hear dat word stable, did you? Bound for you! You been d'yar befo', and you know d'yar's corn in dat 'ar stable; and a heap mo', besides you, know dat d'yar is pervisions a-layin' around here, and dey ain't horses neither, nor yet muils. Git up, I tell you! Ain't you got no more sense, old as you is, dan to be a-snatchin' at dry grass like dat? But Lor', Dick don't blame you! No, honey, Dick ain't got a word agin you. Who is you, any way, I ax you dat i

Is you blood? Is you quality? Dat's what's de matter, ef you believe me. You needn't be a-shakin' your head; you can't tell Dick nothin'. Anybody can see *you* ain't kin to nobody. 'M'h'm! yes, chile! you needn't say a word, Dick knows dat kind far as he can see 'em, be dey man *or* beast. Howsomever, Dick don't mount no sich. Nigger property is too unsartin for dat. Nebberdeless, Marse Charles, bein' as how he belongs to his self, he mought. Nebberdeless, you fotch him home, and pretty is as pretty does, dat's de way old Dick talks it. Polly! Polly!" shouted he to his wife, the cook, as he passed the kitchen door; "Polly! git up, gal! Marse Charles done come and want he supper. *I would say,*" continued he, not content with the colloquial phrases in which he had announced his young master's arrival and the state of his appetite,—"*I would say, Polly,*"—and enveloped in darkness as he was, and invisible even to his spouse, the old man threw himself into an impressive pose, as he always did when about to adorn his language with phrases caught up from the conversation of his master and his guests,—"*I would say de Prodigy Son have arrove, and he as ravenous as de fatted calf.*" Hearing Polly bustling about within the kitchen: "Polly," inquired he, in a stately voice, "did you hearken to what I rubserved?"

"I hear you, Dick."

"But did you make me out, chile, dat's de pint, did you make me out?"

"G'long, man, and put dat horse in de stable. Marse Charley want he supper, course he do. What's de use o' talkin' about fat calves, when you know as well as I does d'yar ain't no sich a thing in de kitchen. Marse Charley want he supper, I know dat, and I'se gittin' ready to cook it fast as I can."

"I b'lieve you. Well, put my name in de pot, chile." And the old man went his way. "Well," said he, soliloquizing upon the much-longed-for return of his young master, "dey tell me chickens, like horses [curses?], always does come home to roost—git up, I tell you!—'cep'n onless dey meets a free nigger in de road, den good-by chickens—for you're gwine to leave us."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"WHY, what's all this, Uncle Dick?" exclaimed Charley, as that venerable servitor entered, with hospitably beaming countenance, bearing a tray. "Roast oysters! why, this cold turkey was enough for a prince." And he brushed from his yellow moustache the foam of a glass of Bass's ale.

The old man, complimented by Charley's surprise, placed the smoking oysters upon the table with a bow of the old school.

"Why, they are beauties! Ah, I am glad you will join me, Uncle Tom! I never saw finer."

"Dey is fine, Marse Charley, dat's a fac'. Polly she save 'em for you special. You know, young mahster" (another bow), "de old-time people used to say you must speed de partin' guest."

"That's true. By the way, Uncle Dick, what do you say to a little something to warm up your old bones?"

"Since you mention it, Marse Charley, I believe de frost has tetchted 'em a little."

"Well, get that bottle out of the sideboard,—you know where it is."

"Know whar 'tis? I wish I had as many dollars as I know whar dat bottle sets!"

"Or would you prefer ale?"

"Thank you, young mahster; whiskey good enough for Dick."

"There, 'tisin't more than half full; take it out and give Polly her share."

"Sarvant, mahster!"

"Take some sugar?"

"Much obleeged, young mahster; seems like 'most everything spiles whiskey. Somehow nuther nothin' don't gee with sperrits 'cep'n 'tis mo sperrits."

"But Aunt Polly might like sugar with hers."

"Dat's a fac', Marse Charley, dat's a fac'; but Lor'

me, women don't know; but den again dey tell me it's a wise man as knows his own father, so d'yar 'tis."

"Well, Uncle Dick, I can make out without you now, so good-night; and present my compliments to Aunt Polly, and you and she drink my health."

"We will pint'ly, Marse Charles, we will pint'ly." And even after the old man had closed the door, you might have heard muttered fragments of his amiable intentions, as he trudged back to the kitchen.

"Well," began my grandfather, rising from the table to fill his pipe, "you made a long stay of it in Richmond. How did you leave the young man?"

"Ah, he is nearly well again," said Charley, deftly removing a side-bone from the fowl before him. "By Jove, I did not know how hungry I was. That early dinner on the boat seems to me now like a far-away dream of a thing that never was. I wonder whether this turkey really is the best that old Sucky ever raised? How good that tobacco smells!"

Charley was happy. The bright fire and good cheer, after his long, cold, and tiresome ride, the intense consciousness of being at home once more, but, above all, the look of beaming satisfaction on the face of the venerable but still vigorous old man, who sat smiling upon him and enjoying his appetite and high spirits, filled him with ineffable content.

"Let me settle with this august bird, Uncle Tom, and then I shall be ready to talk to you about Mr. Smith,—Don Miff, as the girls call him."

"Don Miff?—what girls?"

"The—ah, we gave him that nickname. "I'll explain when I get even with this noble fowl and light my pipe."

"Did you," asked my grandfather, advancing cautiously as a skirmisher, "meet any nice people in Richmond?"

"Oh, yes, very nice people up there,—too many of them; made me talk myself nearly to death,—but very nice people, of course, very. Look at that chap," added he, holding up on the end of his fork a huge oyster.

"You spoke of girls,—did you meet any?" And a pang of jealousy shot through the old man's heart, as he recalled Dick's aphorism on the universal liability of young folks to a certain weakness.

"Oh, lots!—I'll have to cut this fellow in two, I believe."

"Who were they?" asked the old man, trying to smile.

"Who? the girls?"

"Yes; you did not mention any in your letters."

"Of course not. When did you ever know me to write about girls? As I said, I met lots of them at the various houses at which I visited. It seems to me that there are girls everywhere."

"Thank God for it, too."

"Well,—yes,—as it were; but you can't expect a fellow to remember all their names. Oh, there was Lucy Poythress, of course."

"Yes, I knew she was in Richmond."

"And then—and then there was a schoolmate of hers,—Miss Mary Rolfe. You know her father, Mr. James Rolfe. Brilliant girl, they say,—talks beautifully—very accomplished, you know, and all that sort of thing."

"Yes, I have heard she is a really charming girl. What do you say to our having her as one of our Christmas party?" The old man removed his pipe from his mouth. "What do you say, Charley?" And he glanced at the young man's face with a look that was too eager to be shrewd.

"A capital idea!" exclaimed Charley, spearing another oyster with emphasis.

The old man drew vigorously on his pipe several times, and finding it had gone out, rose for a lighter. "You think," said he, puffing between his words as he relit his pipe, contemplatively watching the tongue of flame darting down into the bowl, "that we should have her of the party?"

"Most assuredly. She is a fine girl,—you would like her. In fact, we must have her here if possible."

"Yes," said the old man, "yes." And he gazed at the

bright coals. He felt that he had not landed his trout.
"So you didn't lose your heart?"

"My heart? Who, I?" And Charley gave a loud laugh.

"The very idea amuses you?"

"I should think so! I suppose you suspect that old Cousin Sally's niece—or Cousin Sally's old niece—which ever you please—captivated me?"

"No, I was not thinking of Sarah Ann. In fact, I didn't know that any one had captivated you—till you mentioned it."

"Well, upon my word, I have finished the last of these oysters,—and there is not so much turkey as there was."

"Well, now we will have an old-time whiff together; and now begin your story. However, before you do, can you think of any other girl who would be an acquisition for Christmas?"

"Who? Bless me, Uncle Tom, what could have put such a notion into your head? Oh, I'll tell you,—leave it all to Jack-Whack; he's the ladies' man of the family, you know."

"Very well; and now fill your pipe and tell me all those strange things about that strange Mr. Smith, that you promised me in your letters."

Charley told the story, with one omission. He failed to allude to his having invited the Don to visit Elmington. Omissions to state all manner of things that ordinary mortals would make haste to mention was one of Charley's idiosyncrasies,—so that I suspect that his silence on this point was premeditated. Another was, as I have already hinted, an aversion to expressing an opinion of any one, good or bad. But Mr. Whacker felt instinctively that Charley had conceived a genuine liking for this mysterious stranger. A tone here, a look there, told the tale. Charley's likings, being rare, were exceedingly strong. Moreover, they were never, I may say, misplaced, and my grandfather knew this. So, when Charley had finished his narrative, "You have," said he, "interested me deeply. Who *can* he be? But be he who he may, he is obviously no common man"

Charley puffed away slowly at his pipe.

"He is a remarkable man," continued my grandfather, warming up.

"He has points about him," said Charley, driven to say something.

"Yes, and characteristic points, highly characteristic points," said the old gentleman, with a sort of defiant emphasis.

"He has, beyond question."

"Charley," began Mr. Whacker, rising and taking a lighter,—for he had suffered his pipe to go out,—“don't you think”—and he lit the taper—“what do you say,” he continued, in a hesitating manner, which he tried to cover up under pretence of strict attention to the feat of adjusting the blaze to the tobacco,—“how would it do to invite him here,—just for a week or so, you know?”

It is, I dare say, a mere whim on my part, but I must now beg the contemporary reader to obliterate himself for a few pages.

I must tell you, my descendant-to-the-tenth-power—no, you will be that much of a grandson,—my descendant-to-the-twelfth-power, therefore—I must tell you, as a matter of family history, why your ascendant-to-the-fourteenth-power hesitated.

Our common ancestor was a Virginian,—which means, you will doubtless know, that he was hospitable. Again, he was a Virginian of Leicester County,—and that is as much as to say, as I trust a dim tradition, at least, shall have informed you, that he was a Virginian of Virginians. But, lastly and chiefly, he was Mr. Thomas Whacker of Elmington. What *that* amounts to you can learn from me alone.

Our common ancestor was, then, the soul of hospitality,—hospitality in a certain sense boundless, though it was strictly limited and exclusive in a certain direction. No dull man or woman was welcome at Elmington. But his nets seemed to bring in all the queer fish that floated about Virginia. I suppose there must have been something inborn in him that made odd people attractive to him, and him to them, but I have

no doubt that this trait of his was in part due to the kind of Bohemian life he led in Europe for several years, when he was a young man, mingling, on familiar terms, with musicians, actors, painters, and all manner of shiftless geniuses,—so that the average humdrum citizen possessed little interest for him. If a man could only do or say anything that no one else could do or say, or do it or say it better than any one else, he had a friend in Mr. Whacker. All forms of brightness and of humor—any kind of talent, or even oddity—could unlock that door, which swung so easily on its hinges. And not only men of gifts, but all who had a lively appreciation of gifts, were at liberty to make Elmington their headquarters; so that, as my memory goes back to those days, there rises before me a succession of the drollest mortals that were ever seen in one Virginia house. Now, I need hardly remind you that company of this character has its objections. Men such as I have rapidly outlined are not always very eligible visitors at a country house. It happens, not unfrequently, that a man who is very entertaining to-day is a bore to-morrow,—the day after, a nuisance; so that our grandfather, who was the most unsuspecting of mortals, and who always took men for what they seemed to be on a first interview, was frequently most egregiously taken in, and was often at his wit's end as to how to get rid of some treasure he had picked up. In fact, Charley used to dread the old gentleman's return from the springs in autumn, or the cities in winter; for he was quite sure to have invited to Elmington some of the people whom he had met there; and they often proved not very profitable acquaintances. In fine, wherever he went, he rarely failed to gather more or less gems of purest ray serene, many of which turned out, under Charley's more scrutinizing eyes, very ordinary pebbles indeed.

Unqualified, however, what I have written would give a very erroneous idea of the people our grandfather used to gather around his hospitable board; for I must say that after all deductions have been made, he managed, certainly to get beneath his vine and fig-tree

more really clever and interesting people than I have ever seen in any one house elsewhere. And then, too, as there were no ladies at Elmington, I don't know that his mistakes mattered much. Still, they were sufficiently numerous; and he had begun to lose, not indeed his faith in men, so much as in his own ability to read them. And just in proportion as waned his confidence in his own judgment in such matters, he placed an ever-heightening estimate upon Charley's; so that, in the end, he was always rather nervous upon the arrival of any of his new-found geniuses, till his taciturn friend had indicated, in some way, that he thought them unexceptionable.

Now, Charley had seen Mr. Smith; our grandfather not. Here was a chance. He would throw the responsibility upon Charley. In this particular case he was especially glad to do so, for there was undoubtedly an air of mystery surrounding Mr. Smith, and mystery cannot but arouse suspicion.

Our grandfather continued: "H'm? What do you say? For a week or so?"

There was positively something timid in the way he glanced at Charley out of the corners of his eyes. And now you may dimly discern what was most probably Charley's motive for refraining from alluding to his having himself invited the Don to Elmington. In a spirit of affectionate malice he had deliberately entrapped his old friend into making the proposition. So I must believe, at least.

"By all means," replied Charley, with a cordiality that surprised Mr. Whacker.

"What! Do you say so?" cried our grandfather, rubbing his hands delightedly; and taking out his keys, he began to unlock his desk. "How should the letter be addressed?" continued he, turning and looking at Charley. His face reddened a little as he detected an imperfectly suppressed smile in Charley's eyes. He was somewhat afraid of that smile.

"What are you grinning at?"

"I grinning?"

"Yes, you! Didn't you say we should invite him?"

"Certainly."

"Then what's the matter?"

"It's past eleven," said Charley, glancing at the clock.

"Is it possible!"

"And then the mail doesn't leave till day after to-morrow."

"Oh!" ejaculated our impulsive ancestor, "I had not thought of that!"

CHAPTER XIX.

TEN days or so have passed.

"Well, Dick," said Mr. Whacker, "I suppose we have seen our breakfast?"

Dick gave his company-bow, glancing, as the gentlemen rose from the table, with the imposing look of a generalissimo, at a half-grown boy who acted as his aide-de-camp whenever there was even one guest at Elmington. It was only, in fact, when our small family was alone that this worthy served as what would be called, in the language of our day, a "practical" waiter (there existing, it would seem, at the period of this writing, to judge from the frequency of that adjective upon sign-boards, hordes of theoretical blacksmiths, cobblers, and barbers, against whom the public are thus tacitly warned). For, whenever we had company, Dick would perform the duties rather of a commander than of a private,—*magis imperatoris quam militis*,—summoning to his assistance one or more lads who were too young for steady farm work,—or were so considered, at least, during those times of slavery. Zip,—for under this name went, in defiance of all the philology and all the Grimm's Laws in the world, the boy in question,—(he had been christened Moses,)—Zip sprang nimbly forward under that austere glance of authority and began to clear the table,—half trembling under the severe eye of a chief for whom there was one way of gathering up knives, one method of piling plate upon plate, one of removing napkins,—one and only one.

"Dick," said my grandfather, as soon as pipes were lit, "there is a fire in the library?"

"Yes, sir; I made one de fust thing dis morning."

"Ah, well, Charley, suppose you take Mr. Smith over then; you will be more comfortable there than here. I shall follow you in half an hour or so."

"This way," said Charley. And the two young men, passing through the house and descending a few steps, found themselves upon a pavement of powdered shells, which led to a frame building, painted white, and one story in height, which stood about fifty yards westward of the mansion. This they entered by the left door of two that opened upon the yard, and found themselves in my grandfather's library and sitting-room. It was fitted up with shelves, built into the walls, upon which was to be found a miscellaneous library of about two thousand volumes; the furniture consisting of a very wide and solid square table, a couple of lounges, and a number of very comfortable chairs of various patterns. Charley took up his position with his back to the fire, while the Don sauntered round the room, running his eye along the shelves, and occasionally taking down and examining a volume, and the two chatted quietly for some time.

"The old gentleman is coming over. I hear his step. He has something to show you."

"Ah?" said the Don, looking around the room.

"It is not in this room; it is in the next,—or, rather, it is that room itself," added Charley, pointing to a door.

"That room is the apple of his eye. I always reserve for him the pleasure of exhibiting it to his friends."

"Looking over our books?" interrupted my grandfather, entering the room briskly, with a ruddy winter glow upon his fine face.

"Yes; and I observe that you have a large and capital selection of French classics."

"Yes; I picked them up when I was abroad as a young man. You read French? Ah! Then this will be the place for you on rainy days when you cannot hunt. Charley, have you shown Mr. Smith the Hall?"

"Not yet."

"No?" ejaculated my grandfather, with a surprise that was surprising, seeing that Charley had given him that identical answer on a hundred similar occasions previously. "Mr. Smith," said he, walking toward the inner door, "we have a room here that we think rather unique in its way." And he placed his hand upon the knob. "We call it 'The Hall.' Walk in!" And he opened wide the door, stepping back with the air of an artist withdrawing a curtain from a new production of his pencil.

The Don advanced to the threshold of the room, and giving one glance within, turned to his host with a look of mingled admiration and surprise. The old gentleman, who was as transparent as glass, fairly beamed with gratification at observing the pleased astonishment of his guest. "Walk in, walk in," said he, wreathed in smiles. "Be careful," added he, laying hold of the Don's arm, as the latter's feet seemed disposed to fly from under him,—*"the floor is as smooth as glass."*

"So I perceive. Why, what on earth can you do with such a room in the country?" And the Don lifted his eyes to the very lofty ceiling.

"That's the question!" observed Mr. Whacker, giving Charley a knowing look.

"One would say it was a ball-room," said the Don, looking down upon the perfectly polished floor, in which their figures stood reflected as in a mirror.

"It would do very well for that," said the old gentleman. "I think it would puzzle you to find the joints in that floor," he added, stooping down and running his thumb nail across a number of the very narrow planks. "You observe, the room is ceiled throughout with heart-pine,—no plastering anywhere. I used, as you see, the darker wood for the floor, and selected the lightest-colored planks for the ceiling; while I made the two shades alternate on the walls. You think so? Well, I think it ought to be, for I was several years collecting and selecting the lumber for this room,—not a plank that I did not inspect carefully. And so you think it would make a good ball-room? So it would,

in fact. Thirty feet by twenty would give room for a goodly number of twinkling feet."

"I see a piano at the other end of the room."

"Yes," said Mr. Whacker, leaning forward, his fingers interlaced behind his back, and his smiling eyes fixed upon the floor. He was giving the Don time,—he had not seen everything in the room.

"What!" exclaimed the latter, suddenly, as his eyes chanced to stray into a corner of the room, which was rather dark with its closed blinds. "Is not that a violin-case standing in the corner?"

"Yes, that's a violin case," rejoined Mr. Whacker, softly, while his eyes made an involuntary movement in the direction of the neighboring corner.

"And another!" exclaimed the Don, "and still another! and, upon my word, there is a violoncello in the fourth corner!"

My grandfather threw his head back as though he would gaze upon the ceiling, but closed his eyes; and rocking gently back and forth, and softly flapping upon the floor with both feet, was silent for a while. He was content. The surprise of the stranger had been complete,—dramatically complete,—his wondering admiration obvious and sincere.

Charley watched his friend quietly, with a tender humor in his eyes. He had witnessed a number of similar scenes in this room, but this had been the most entirely successful of them all.

"The third box," resumed my grandfather, softly, with his eyes still closed, and still rocking from heel to toe, "contains a viola."

"A viola! Then you have a complete set of quartet instruments!" And he turned, looking from case to case, as if to make sure that he saw aright. "What a droll, divorced air they have in this great room, each solitary in his own corner! Surely you can never—"

"Never use them?" And my grandfather paused with a smile on his face. "I find this room rather cold. Let us adjourn to the Library and I will tell you how we manage."

CHAPTER XX.

So, while Mr. Whacker is explaining matters to the Don, I shall make things clear to the reader.

My grandfather, when a young man, spent several years in Europe. He was an enthusiast in every fibre, and one of his enthusiasms was music. Very naturally, therefore, he took lessons while abroad,—lessons on the violin, the piano being held, in Virginia, an instrument fit only for women and foreigners. But, undertaking the violin for the first time when he was a grown man, he never acquired, ardently as he practised, anything like a mastery over that difficult instrument. At any rate, returning to Virginia and finding himself no longer in an artist-atmosphere, his ardor gradually cooled, so that until about ten or twelve years before the period of my story, all I can remember of my grandfather's musical performances is his occasional fiddling for me and such of my young school-mates as chanced to visit me. During the Christmas holidays, especially, when Elmington was always crowded with young people, it was an understood thing that Uncle Tom, as most of his neighbors' children delighted to call him, was to be asked to play. Christmas Eve, notably, was no more Christmas Eve, at Elmington, without certain jigs and reels executed by "Uncle Tom," than without two enormous bowls—one of eggnog, the other of apple-toddy—concocted by him with his own hands. The thing had grown into an institution, more and more fixed as the years went by. On such occasions, immediately after the old gentleman had taken his second glass of eggnog,—not before,—it was in order to call for his annual exhibition of virtuosity; whereupon Charley—no one else could be trusted to bear the precious burden—was despatched to my grandfather's chamber, where, upon a special shelf in a closet, lay,

from Christmas to Christmas, a certain old violin, which rarely saw the light at any other time.

But, about a dozen years before the events I am now describing, there came a German musician—Wolfgang Amadeus Waldteufel chanced to be his name—and established himself at Leicester Court-House as a piano teacher,—or, rather, he gave lessons on any and all instruments, as will be the case in the country.

Herr Waldteufel was an excellent pianist, and, in fact, a thorough musician. Strangers from the cities, when they heard him play at Elmington, were always surprised to find so brilliant a performer in the country, and used to wonder why he should thus hide his light under a bushel. But the truth is, a man generally finds his place in the world, and Herr Waldteufel was no exception. In the frequent hinges of his elbow was to be found the explanation of his losing his patronage, in city after city; so that it was natural enough that he found himself, at last, giving lessons in a village, and in the houses of the neighboring gentry, upon piano, fiddle, flute, guitar, and, shades of Sebastian Bach! must I even add—the banjo?

And, notwithstanding his weakness, the honest Herr was an excellent teacher. True, he did occasionally fail to put in an appearance for a lesson, when no excuse was to be found in the weather; but his patrons learned to forgive him; and, as he was very amiable and obliging, he was a general favorite, and welcome everywhere.

Mr. Whacker had not been slow to form the acquaintance of the Herr and to invite him to Elmington; at first under the pretext of having him tune his piano. The tuning over, the Herr was naturally asked to play; and, one thing leading to another, he and Mr. Whacker soon found themselves trying over a slow movement, here and there, out of a musty and dusty old edition of Mozart's Sonatas. The music they made was, I dare say, wretched, as my grandfather had not played anything of that kind for years; but it would have been hard to say which of the two was most delighted,—the German, at finding so enthusiastic a lover

of his art in a Virginia country gentleman; my grandfather, at the prospect of being able to renew his acquaintance with his idolized Mozart, whom he always persisted in placing at the head of all composers. The Elmington dinner and wines did not lessen the Herr's estimate of the treasure he had found; and (Mr. Whacker scouting the very idea of his leaving him that night) they separated at the head of the stairs, at one o'clock in the morning, after a regular musical orgie, vowing that they had not seen the last of it. Nor had they; for before Herr Waldteufel had set out, in the morning, for a round of lessons in the neighborhood, he had promised to return, the following Friday, to dinner. And so, from that day forth, he was sure to drop in upon us every Friday afternoon; and regularly, after dinner, he and my grandfather would fall to and play and play until they were exhausted. Next day the Herr would sally forth, and, after giving his lessons, return in time for dinner; after which they would have another time together.

Herr Waldteufel always spent Sunday with us; but my grandfather would never play on that day. I suppose it would be hardly possible for a man who has spent several years on the Continent to see anything "sinful" in music on Sunday; but neither is it possible for any man, even though he be a philosopher, altogether to evade the pressure of surrounding convictions. Now, for the solidity—it wouldn't do to say stolidity—of our Sabbatarianism, we Virginians may safely defy all rivalry. Virginia is not only *one* of the Middle States, she is *the* middle State of the Union in many other respects, but especially in her theological attitude. While, to the north and east of her, religious systems that have weathered the storms of centuries are rocking to their foundations, nay, tumbling before our very eyes, undermined by the incessant rush of opinions ever newer, more radical, more aggressive; and while, to the southward and westward, we see the instability and recklessness inseparable from younger communities, the Old Dominion stands immovable as a rock; believing what she has always believed, and seriously

minded so to believe to the end of time,—astronomy, geology, and biology to the contrary notwithstanding. Now, of all the religious convictions of your true Virginian this is the most deeply rooted,—the most universally accepted,—that man was made for the Sabbath, not the Sabbath for man. Again: according to our biblical exegesis the word Sabbath does not really mean Sabbath, but Sunday,—the last day of the week, that is, being synonymous with the first. Now, as first is the opposite of last,—mark the geometric cogency of the reasoning,—so is work the contrary of play. Hence it is clear to us (however others may laugh) that the commandment forbidding all manner of work on the last day of the week was really meant to inhibit all manner of play on the first; *Q. E. D.*

I must admit, however, that when, one Sunday, after returning from church, the Herr opened the piano, “just to try over” the hymns we had heard, my grandfather made no objection; and then, when his fingers somehow strayed into a classical andante, the old gentleman either believed or affected to believe that it was a Teutonic form of religious music, and called for more. And so, things going from bad to worse, it came about that in the end we had hours of piano music every Sunday, to the great scandal of some of our neighbors, who did not fail to hint that the Herr was an atheist and my grandfather not far from one.

But Mr. Whacker would persist in drawing the line at the fiddle; making a distinction perfectly intelligible to all true Virginians,—though his course in this matter ever remained a sore puzzle to the warped and effete European brain of Herr Wolfgang Amadeus Waldeufel.

For many months—for two or three years, in fact—after this arrangement was set on foot, my grandfather was at fever heat with his music. To the amazement, not to add amusement of his neighbors and friends, he fell to practising with all the ardor of a girl in her graduating year; nor was he content to stop there. He set every one else, over whom he had any influence, to scraping catgut. His favorite text during this

period, and one upon which he preached with much vigor and eloquence, was the insipidity of American life,—its total lack of the æsthetic element.

“What rational relaxations have we? None! Whist is adapted to those among us of middle age, or the old; but whist is, at the best, unsocial. Dancing gives happiness to the young only. Hunting affords amusement during one season and to one sex only. You cannot read forever; so that the greater part of our leisure-time we spend in gaping or gabbling,—boring or being bored. How different it would be if all our young people would take the trouble to make musicians of themselves! one taking one instrument, another another. Why, look at our neighbor up the river, with his five sons and five daughters! Why—PSHAW!”—for, invariably, when he got to this particular neighbor, the bright vision of a possible domestic orchestra of ten—or twelve rather—would seem to rob him of the power of utterance, and he would pace up and down his library with an expression of enthusiastic disgust on his heated features.

Now, among the victims of Mr. Whacker’s views in this regard was his grandson, the teller of this tale; and I believe it was really one of the most serious of the minor troubles of his life that he could never make a musician of me. As it was, he ultimately gave me up as a hopeless case. But with Charley his reward was greater. Charley had readily consented to take lessons on the violin from Herr Waldteufel, as well before he entered the University, as during his vacations; and when, after he left college, he came to live with us, he was not likely to give up his music, as the reader can very well understand. During the week he and his friend used to play duos together, and they made very pleasant music too, and on Fridays and Saturdays they would perform transcriptions (at making which the Herr was really clever) for two violins and piano.

Things went on in this way for a year or two; until, in fact, the summer of 1855. It was during the summer of that year, it will be remembered, that Norfolk was so terribly scourged by yellow fever, and my

grandfather, instead of going, as usual, to the springs, had remained at Elmington, and opened his doors to his friends and other refugees from the stricken city. Now it so happened that, a few weeks before the epidemic declared itself, a young French or—to speak more accurately—Belgian violinist had dropped down into Norfolk, from somewhere, in search of a living; who, panic-stricken upon the outbreak of the fever, had fled, he hardly knew whither; but happening to find his way to Leicester Court-House, was not long in falling in with Herr Waldteufel; and he, exulting in the treasure he had found, brought him to Elmington on the first Friday afternoon thereafter ensuing.

"I have inform Monsieur Villemain," whispered the Herr, at the first opportunity, "dot Elmington vas so full as a teek von peoples, but he can shleep mit me. But you know, Barrone, vy I have bring dis Frenchman, oder Belge, to Elmington?" (He would insist upon calling Mr. Whacker Baron.)

"I suppose he is a refugee, and you knew—"

"A refuchee! ja wohl! Ach! but mein Gott, Barrone," exclaimed he, clasping his hands, "vat for a feedler ist dot mon!"

"You don't tell me so!"

"Donnerwetter!" rejoined the Herr, rolling up his eyes, "you joost hear him one time, dot's all!"

From that day in August until the following Christmas M. Villemain was a member of our household; and even then he took his departure much against my grandfather's will. His coming among us enabled Mr. Whacker to do what he had scarcely dreamed of before,—to establish, namely, a string quartet.

I shall never forget the first meeting of the club. Waldteufel, who was already a tolerable violinist, had readily agreed to take the violoncello part, and Charley, though with many misgivings, had consented to tackle the viola; and the Herr was despatched to Baltimore to purchase these two instruments. Upon their arrival, it was agreed that the novices should have two weeks' practice before any attempt at concerted music should be made, Waldteufel taking his 'cello to his rooms at

the Court-House, while Charley was to attack the viola under the direction of M. Villemain; but Mr. Whacker grew so impatient for a trial of their mettle that, on Friday morning of the first week, he sent a buggy for the Herr, requesting him to bring his instrument with him; and, accordingly, just before dinner, up drove the bass, his big fiddle occupying the lion's share of the vehicle. Dinner over, my grandfather could allow but one pipe before the attack began. The centre-table in the parlor was soon cleared of books; the stands were placed upon it; the performers took their seats; the parts were distributed, "A" sounded, the instruments put in tune. The composition they had selected was that quartet of Haydn (in C major) known as the Kaiser Quartet, in the slow movement of which is found the famous Austrian Hymn.

"We are all then ready?" asked M. Villemain (in French), placing his violin under his chin. "Ah!" added he, in that short sharp tone so peculiarly French, and the bows descended upon the strings.

It was worth while to watch the bearing and countenances of the four players.

The Frenchman, entirely master of his instrument and his part,—glancing only now and then at his music,—ejaculating words of caution or encouragement; Waldteufel, taking in the meaning of the printed signs without an effort, but doubtful as to his fingering,—correcting his intonation with a rapid slide of his hand and an apologetic smile and nod to his brother artist; Charley, serene and imperturbable, but putting forth all that was in him; while my grandfather, conscious that the second violin was most likely to prove the block of stumbling, and anxious not to be utterly out-done by the "boys,"—his eyes riveted upon the page before him, his face overspread with a certain stage-fright pallor,—played as though the fate of kingdoms hung upon his bow. At last, not without a half-dozen break-downs, they approached the end of the first movement; and when, with a sharp twang, they struck, all together, the last note, my grandfather's exultation knew no bounds.

"By Jove," cried he, slapping his thigh,—“by Jove, we can do it!” And congratulations were general.

But the culmination of the enthusiasm occurred during the performance of the slow movement. Here the air, a gem of imperishable beauty, passes from one instrument to another. When the theme falls to the second violin, the violino primo accompanies, the viola and 'cello being silent, if I remember aright. Here was Mr. Whacker's opportunity. The movement is without technical difficulties, but the mere idea that he had a solo to perform made the old gentleman as nervous as a graduating Miss. He lightly touched his strings to be quite sure they were in tune—gave a turn to a peg—wiped his spectacles—blew his nose—lifted the violin to his left ear, softly plucking D and G as though still in doubt—smoothed down the page—tightened his bow—and, with a bow to M. Villemain, began.

He had scarcely played a half-dozen notes when the Herr cried out, “Goot for de Barrone!”

“Bravo, Secondo!” echoed the Primo from the midst of his rapid semiquavers.

Deeply gratified and encouraged, the old man gave an unconscious but perceptible toss of the head; and his snowy locks trembled upon his temples. Charley lifted his eyes from the floor with a sigh of relief. His anxiety lest his old friend should break down had been touching to see,—the more so as he had tried so hard to conceal it.

The performer reached the *appoggiatura* about the middle of the air, and turned it not without grace. It was nothing to do,—absolutely nothing,—but the two artists were bent on giving applause without stint.

“*Parbleu! Tourné à merveille!*” cried the First Violin, in his native language.

“Py Tam!” shouted the Bass, in an unknown tongue.

“*Je crois bien!*” rejoined the Belgian, as though he understood him.

One of the Herr's foibles was his fondness for making what it was his happiness to consider puns in the

English language. "De Barrone served us a good turn dere!" he whispered to his unoccupied comrade.

The Viola smiled without taking his eyes off the Second Fiddle.

"You take?" inquired the Violoncello, stimulating his neighbor's sense of humor by a gentle punch in the ribs with his bow.

"Very good, very good!" answered Charley; and my grandfather, taking the compliment to himself, rather laid himself out on a *crescendo* and *forte* that he encountered just then.

Mr. Whacker had practised his part over, hundreds of times, during the week preceding its execution by him on this occasion, and he really played it very creditably. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that, at its end, he should have been greeted with a small tempest of clappings and bravos and goots; and it remained his conviction ever after, that of all the quartets of Haydn, the Kaiser most nearly approaches the unapproachable perfection of Mozart.

He looked at the matter from the Second Violin point of view. Who shall cast the first stone?

CHAPTER XXI.

MEANWHILE, Mr. Whacker has not been idle. He has been giving his wondering and interested guest an account of what I have just narrated to the reader; omitting, naturally, many things that I have said; saying many things that I have omitted; telling his story, that is, in his own way. Let us drop in upon them and see where they are.

"This was in 1855,—five years ago. How have you managed to supply M. Villemain's place during all this time? Have you succeeded in developing the local talent?"

"Local talent? Bless you, no. I labored faithfully with my grandson, but had to give him up,—no taste

that way. Then there was a young fellow, the son of a neighbor,—young William Jones,—who is now at the University. I had great hopes of him when he began to take lessons; but the scamp was too lazy to practise his exercises, and pretended he couldn't see any tune in classical music. Perfectly absurd! However," quickly added Mr. Whacker, observing that his guest was silent, "the majority are of his way of thinking. Bill is a capital fiddler, however, and is invaluable at our dancing parties. He will be down Christmas, and you will hear him."

"I should like very much to do so," replied the Don, rather stiffly.

"His 'Arkansas Traveller' is an acknowledged m-m-m-masterpiece," chimed in Charley, "and his 'B-B-B-Billy in the Low Grounds' the despair of every other fiddler in the county."

"I should like very much indeed to hear him," said the stranger, laughing heartily at Charley's neatly turned phrase, over which his stammering threw a quaint halo of added humor. "And so you had to give him up also, Mr. Whacker?"

"Yes, I had to give them all up, except Charley here." And he gave that young man's knee a vigorous slap, accompanied with an admiring glance. "You could hardly guess how I manage. You see Mr. Waldeufel visits Baltimore twice a year to lay in a stock of music and other articles needed by his pupils, and he has instructions to look about him and pick up, if possible, some violinist newly landed in the country, or one temporarily out of employment; or perhaps he may find an artist desiring a vacation, to whom a few weeks in the country would be a tempting bait. All such he is at liberty to invite to Elmington,—provided, of course," added Mr. Whacker, with a wave of his hand, "provided they be proper persons."

"Or the reverse," soliloquized Charley, prying narrowly, as he spoke, into the bowl of his pipe.

"Or the what?"

"I addressed an observation to my p-p-p-pipe."

"Well, suppose they *are* sometimes rather—in fact—

rather—what difference, pray, does it make to us two bachelors? You will no doubt think, Mr. Smith, that this is a quartet under difficulties,—and so it is, but it is a quartet after all. If not, in dissenting phrase, a ‘stated,’ it is, at least, an ‘occasional service of song.’”

“Goot for de Barrone!” quoted Charley.

“Then again, I not infrequently invite the leader of some watering-place band to drop in on us, for a week or so, on the closing of the season at the Springs. They are generally excellent musicians, and glad enough, after a summer of waltzes and polkas, to refresh themselves with a little real music. So you see that, after all, where there is a will there is a way. Provide yourself with a cage, and some one will be sure to give you a bird; build a house, and—”

“The r-r-r-rats will soon come.”

“I was going to say a wife—”

“Oh, then, instead of r-r-r-rats, it’s br-br-br-brats!”

“You see,” continued my grandfather, laughing, “I have the Hall there for a cage.”

“Yes, but where is your bird, your fourth player?”

“Very true, the bird is lacking just at present. The truth is, we have had poor luck of late. We have not had any quartet music for a year,—not even our quartets where the piano takes the place of one of the violins, owing to the absence of our young-lady artiste. By the way, I forgot to tell you, in speaking of our local talent, that one of our girls is an excellent pianist, and that through her we have been enabled (until the past year) to keep up our quartet evenings, in the absence of a first violin; the main trouble being that I am hardly equal to my part—that of the first violin—in these compositions,—Lucy Poythress. You know her?” asked Mr. Whacker, on observing the sudden interest in the Don’s face.

“Why, Uncle Tom, Mr. Smith saved her life! Don’t you remember?”

“Of course! of course! you must pardon an old man’s tricks of memory!”

“Miss Poythress is a good musician?”

“Oh, wonderful, we think. She was the only one of

Mr. Waldteufel's pupils who had the least fancy for classical music. She seemed to feel its meaning from the very first, and I hardly know what we should have done without her. For several years—ever since she was fourteen, in fact—she has been playing with us; in quartet when we needed her, a solo between our Haydn and Mozart when we happened to have a first violin. You should know her,—know her well, I mean. So much character, and yet so gentle! Such depth of soul! In fact, she is an incomparable girl! I must confess, I never cease to wonder how Charley, here—”

“There you go again, Uncle Tom!”

“This good-for-nothing fellow, Mr. Smith, has, for several years, been crossing the river, Friday afternoons, to fetch her and her mother to our quartet parties,—taking them back, and spending the night under the same roof with this noble girl,—breakfasting with her next morning,—and yet— Where would you find another sister, eh?”

Charley rose, and, after walking about the room and glancing at the books in an aimless sort of way, without other reply than a smile, descended the steps and stood on the lawn with his fingers interlaced behind his back.

“That’s what he would have said,” added Mr. Whacker in an undertone, “had you not been present; or else, that if Mrs. Poythress were his mother-in-law, what should he do for a mother? He is a singular fellow,—a ‘regular character,’ as the saying is. He has the greatest aversion to giving expression to his feelings, and fancies that he hides them,—though he succeeds about as well as the fabled ostrich. The truth is, he has the warmest attachment for Lucy (I wish it were only a little warmer), but a still greater affection for her mother. There are, in fact,” added Mr. Whacker, lowering his voice into a mysterious whisper, “peculiar reasons for his devotion to her and hers to him,—but it is a sad story which I will not go into; but, for ten or fifteen years—ever, at least, since a cruel bereavement she experienced—he has made it a rule to spend, if at all possible, one night of every week under her roof.

This weekly visit is a pleasure to Charley, but it seems to be a necessity with poor Mrs. Poythress. No weather can keep him back. Fair or foul, go he will; and, on one occasion, he spent a night in the water, clinging to his capsized boat. 'I can't help it, Uncle Tom,' he will say; 'she misses my visit so.'

"My God!" cried the stranger, in a voice of piercing anguish; and, leaping from his seat, he stood with his temples pressed between his hands and his powerful frame convulsed with emotion.

Had my grandfather been a man of more tact, he could not have failed to remark in the dancing eyes, twitching mouth, and pallid features of his guest the symptoms of a coming storm. As it was, it burst upon him like a bolt from a cloudless sky. He stood aghast; and to the eager inquiring glances of Charley, who had sprung into the room on hearing the cry and the noise of the falling chair, he could only return, for answer, a look of utter bewilderment. The stranger had turned, on Charley's entrance upon the scene, and was supporting his head upon his hand, against the sash of the rear window.

"I cannot *imagine*!" silently declaimed and disclaimed my grandfather.

"I hope—" began Charley, advancing.

The Guest, as though afraid to trust his voice, with a turn of his head flashed a kindly smile upon Charley, accompanied by a deprecatory motion of the hand, and again averted his face as though not yet master of his features; but, a moment after, he straightened himself, suddenly, and turning, advanced towards his host.

"Mr. Whacker," he began, with a grave smile, "I beg you a thousand pardons. There are certain parallelisms in life—I mean that you inadvertently touched a chord that quite overmastered me for the moment. Forgive me." And, taking my grandfather's hand, he bowed over it with deep humility. Turning then to Charley, who, the reader will bear in mind, had not heard the words of Mr. Whacker that had wrought the explosion, the Guest, to Charley's great astonishment, grasped both his hands with a fervid grip, but averted

look; then abruptly dropping his hands, he seized his hat and strode out of the door; leaving our two friends in blank amazement. They stood staring at each other with wide eyes. At last, Charley raised his hand and tapped his forehead with his forefinger, then went to the door and looked out.

"By Jove," cried he, "he is making straight for the river!" And, hatless as he was, he sprang to the ground and started after him, at a run—for the Guest was swinging along with giant strides. Charley's heart beat quick, when the stranger, reaching the shore, stopped suddenly, stretching out both his arms toward the opposite bank with wild, passionate gestures. The pursuer was about to cry out, when the pursued, turning sharply to the left, moved on again, as rapidly as before. It was then that, either hearing Charley's hurrying steps, or by chance turning his head, he saw that he was followed. He stopped instantly; and, coming forward to meet Charley:

"I must ask pardon again," said he, with extended hand. "I should have told you that I was going out for a good long walk. I shall be back before dinner."

"All right!"

The Guest doffed his hat and began to move on again; but Charley, seized with a sudden remnant of suspicion, stopped him with a motion of his hand. "Remember," said he, going close up to him, and speaking in a low but earnest tone,—*"remember, you have two good friends yonder."* And, with a toss of his upturned thumb, he pointed, over his shoulder, towards the house, which lay behind them; and young Frobisher, feeling that he had said much, cast his eyes upon the ground, bashful as a girl.

"I believe you," said the guest; "and," he added with earnestness, "the belief is much to me—*much*,—see you at dinner."

Charley, returning, found Mr. Whacker standing on the lawn, awaiting, with some anxiety, his report.

"It's all right, I think. Look at him! See how he is booming along the bank! But, Uncle Tom, how on

earth did you and Mr. Smith manage to get up those theatricals?"

"Hang me if I know! We were talking, as quietly as possible, about some trivial matter or other,—entirely trivial, I assure you,—and, all of a sudden, up he leaped in the air as though he had been shot. Let me see, what *were* we talking about?" And Mr. Whacker rested his forehead upon his hand. "Let—me—see. No, I can't for the life of me remember. The 'theatricals,' as you call them, must have driven everything out of my head; but they were nothings that we were saying, I assure you."

"You remember that, when I left the room, you were teasing me about not falling in love with Lucy Poythress?"

"Yes, yes, yes; now I have it! Well, after you went out, I told him what friends you and Mrs. Poythress were, and how you paid her a weekly visit, rain or shine,—ah, yes, and how once you were upset, when you would cross the river in spite of my remonstrances, and so on and so on."

"That was all?"

"Every word. Why, you were not out of the room two minutes!"

"H'm!" And Charley slowly filled his pipe, and, lighting it, went out upon the lawn, where he walked haltingly up and down for some time. Quickly raising his eyes at last, and fixing them inquiringly upon the Poythress mansion, nestling across the river, in its clump of trees, he gazed at it with a look, now intent, now abstracted. "Can it be?" he muttered; and he stood long, chin upon breast, buried in thought; but what these thoughts were he breathed to no man.

CHAPTER XXII.

So, after all, my grandfather lost his opportunity of explaining to the Don how he came to build the Hall. No doubt he will do so as soon as the latter returns from his walk. But there are reasons why I prefer to give my own account of the matter. The truth is, I believe my narration will be more exactly in accordance with the facts of the case than Mr. Whacker's would be. For, my grandfather (though as truthful as ever man was) having, like the rest of us, a great deal of human nature in him, did not always see very clearly what his own motives were; and, had he been asked why he had constructed this rather superfluous building, would have given an answer at variance with what Charley's or mine would have been. Now, had either of us been questioned, confidentially, and apart from our friend, we would have unhesitatingly affirmed that he had built the Hall as a home for his quartet; but had he, perchance, overheard us, he would have denied this, and not without heat. And this is easily explicable.

On the whole subject of music—music, whether quartet or solo, vocal or instrumental—Mr. Whacker had grown sore, and as nearly irritable as his strong nature admitted of. His neighbors had worried him. They—and who shall wonder at it?—had naturally been filled with amazement—and, what is harder to bear—amusement—when their old friend had suddenly, at his time of life, burst out, as the homely phrase runs, in a fresh place,—and of this he could not but be aware; so that in the end he grew so sensitive under their jokes that he altogether gave over inviting even his nearest neighbors to be present at the Elmington musical performances. “Well, I hear your grandfather has got a new Dutchman,”—that was the way one old gentleman used to speak of the arrival at Elmington of each successive find of Waldteufel's in Baltimore; and

then his sides would shake. Naturally enough, my grandfather grew more and more reticent, under the circumstances, as to his musical doings and projects.

Now, the Elmington mansion was, originally, like most of the residences of the Virginia gentry, a rather plain and ill-planned structure. I dare say it had never occurred to the ancestral Whacker who contrived it that any one of its rooms would ever be acoustically tested by a string quartet. At any rate, my grandfather found his parlor, with its thick carpet and heavy furniture, very unsatisfactory as a concert-room, and resolved to build a better. True, he himself never uttered a word to this effect. Like a skilful strategist, he kept his front and flanks well covered as he advanced upon his objective-point. He began his forward movement with some skill.

The Virginians of that day, as is well known, with a hospitality that defied all arithmetic, used to stow away in their houses more people in proportion to the number of the rooms than was at all justifiable,—and a marvellous good time they all had too,—the necessity for extra ventilation being met by the happy provision of nature, that no true Virginian ever shuts a door.

I am far from claiming, my dear boy, that these ancestors of yours were entitled to any credit for their hospitality. For, even in our day of Mere Progress, we have ascertained that this is but a semibarbarous virtue, while, in your day of Perfected Sweetness and Light, it will be classed, doubtless, among the entirely savage vices. I am writing neither eulogium nor apology. I draw pictures merely. You and your day must draw the moral.

Well, Field-Marshal Whacker began operations by throwing out the suggestion, every now and then, that the Library would be more comfortable to the young men who were sometimes crowded into it, on gala occasions (what a time they used to have!), if the bookcases and the great table were removed. But where to put them? He had often been puzzling his head of late, he would say, trying to contrive some addition to the house, but it was so built that he did not very well see

how it could be added to. After much beating about the bush, from time to time, at last the proposition for a separate building came. Charley, very naturally, could not see the necessity for this, considering we were but three; but, finding the old gentleman's heart set on the project, he ceased to raise objections.

"It would be such a comfortable little nook to retire to."

"Retire from whom, Uncle Tom?"

"Often, you know, our friends bring their children."

"Very true."

"It would be a good place to read or write in, when the house was full."

"Exactly."

"Certainly. And then, sometimes, when a lot of you young fellows got together, and wanted to have a 'high old time,' you could go out there, and I could go to bed and let you have it out. Don't you see?"

"Capital."

So it was settled.

"But, Charley, would not a single room, stuck out all alone in the yard, have rather a queer look?"

"Rather queer, I should say."

"While we are about it, why not put two rooms under one roof?"

"Of course."

"Don't you think so? Then we'll do it. Two rooms,—let me see." And the wily old captain seemed to reflect. "As the rooms would be of only one story, the pitch should be high,—better artistic effect, you know."

"Undoubtedly," acquiesced Charley. And the crafty engineer meditated as to how to run his next and last parallel.

"But what kind of a room shall the second be? The first will be our Library, and, in case of a pinch, an extra guest-chamber, of course. But what are we to do with the second room? There's the rub."

"That's a fact," granted Charley between puffs; and the twain were silent for a little while.

"By Jove, I have it!" exclaimed my grandfather, slapping his thigh.

Charley looked up.

"We'll make a ball-room of it."

"A ball-room! Good Lord, Uncle Tom!" cried Charley, surprised, for a moment, out of his habitual calm.

"Why not?" asked Mr. Whacker, appealing with his eyes from Charley to me, and from me to Charley.

"Why not a ball-room? Remember how many young people we frequently have here, especially Christmas time,—and you know they always dance."

"I had forgotten that."

"As it is, they must dance on a carpet, or else it must be taken up, and that is a great bother; whereas, with a nicely waxed floor! And then," added my grandfather, casually,—running over the words as if of minor importance ('twas a regular masked battery),—"and then the fiddles would sound so much better in such a room."

"Oho!" cried Charley.

"What?" quickly put in Mr. Whacker, slightly coloring.

"The boys and girls would enjoy it," replied Charley, demurely.

"Enjoy it? I should think so!" exclaimed Mr. Whacker, relieved to feel that he had not uncovered his artillery.

And so my grandfather set about gathering suitable lumber for his "Library," as he called it; but it was nearly two years before the structure was complete; so many trees did he find unsuitable, after they were felled, and so carefully did he season the planks, before they were deemed worthy of forming part of this sacred edifice. Nor, during all this time, did Mr. Whacker ever once allude to the "Ball-Room" as likely to prove a suitable place for his quartet performances. At last, in the month of November, 1858, just two years before the arrival of the Don at Elmington, the "Library" was finished, and we three were walking over the glittering waxed floor of Mr. Whacker's so-called Ball-Room, admiring its proportions and the exquisite perfection of its joinery.

"Well, boys, we'll christen her at Christmas. We'll have one of the liveliest dancing-parties ever seen in the county. Suppose, Jack, you go over to the house and bring us a fiddle, and we shall see how she sounds."

I brought the fiddle.

"Now, Charley, toss us off a reel."

Charley dashed into a dancing tune, and played a few bars.

"Magnificent!" exclaimed Mr. Whacker, flushing with intense delight. "Did you ever hear such resonance!"

"Magnificent!" we echoed; and Charley resumed his playing.

"Do you know?" began he, pausing and raising his head from the fiddle,—but on he dashed again. "Do you know, Uncle Tom?" he resumed, biting his under-lip, as he gave a slight twist to a peg,—“Do you know, it occurs to me that this room,—” the scamp winked at me with his off eye. “Listen!” And, placing the violin under his chin, he began to play a movement out of one of Mozart’s quartets. “How does that sound?” he asked, looking up into my grandfather’s face with an expression of innocence utterly brazen.

This simple question, and the simplicity with which it was put, covered our unsuspecting ancestor with confusion, though he himself could hardly have told why. Before he could recover himself sufficiently to reply, Charley went on,—

“Do you know, Uncle Tom, that it occurs to me that this room is the very place for our quartets? How strange that it should never have occurred to us before!” And turning to me, he bended upon me that stare of serene stolidity under which he was wont to mask his intense sense of the humorous. I had no such power of looking solemn and burying a smile deep down in my heart, as the pious Æneas used to do his grief, while he was fooling Sidonian Dido, poor thing; and so, as Charley and I had had many a quiet joke over my grandfather’s transparent secret, I burst out laughing.

"Why, don't you agree with me?" demanded Charley with austere composure. "What do you think, Uncle Tom?"

"Our quartets? Well, now that you suggest it—H'm!" And he glanced around the room with a critical look. "We'll ask Mr. Waldteufel next Friday. What on earth is that idiot giggling about?"

Flauti.



Oboi.



Clarinetti
in B.



Fagotti.



Corno I. u. II.
in Es.



Corno III.
in Es.



Trombo
in Es.



Timpani
in Es. B.



Violino I.



Violino II.



Viola.



Violoncello e
Contrabasso.



SYMPHONY OF LIFE.

MOVEMENT II.

SCHERZO.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was just one week before Christmas,—that of 1860, the last Christmas of the olden time,—that El-mington—that Virginia—forever and forever—was to see—. But no matter; we did not know it then. The guests from Richmond were to arrive that evening. Everything was in readiness.

The hickory logs, which alone my grandfather—and his father before him, for that matter—would burn during the holidays,—lighting the first noble pile on Christmas Eve,—the hickory logs were banked up, high and dry, in the wood-house. The stall-fed ox nodded over his trough; the broad-backed Southdowns, clustered together in a corner of their shed, basked in the sun and awaited a return of appetite; a remnant of sturdy porkers, left over from the November killing, that blinked at you from out their warm beds, and grunted when requested to rise, suggested sausage; while over on Charley's farm, and under Aunt Sucky's able management, aldermanic turkeys, and sleek, plump pullets, and ducks, quacking low from very fatness, and geese that had ceased to wrangle,—all thought themselves, like man before Copernicus, the centre of the universe. Then, in the little creek, too, which ebbed and flowed hard by, there lay bushels and bushels of oysters freshly taken from The River in front. These, too, were ready; while, in the cellar, suspended from hooks, there dangled, thanks to the industry of Charley

and the Don, daily swelling bunches of partridges and rabbits, of woodcock and of wild fowl.

And can you not detect the odor of apples issuing even from that locked door? There are great piles of them stowed away there; and cider, I suspect, is not lacking. And above, the storeroom showed shelves weighed down, since the arrival of the last steamer, with such things as Elmington could not supply. Boxes and bags and bundles gave forth the mellow fragrance of raisins, the cheerful rattle of nuts, the pungent savor of spices,—the promise of all things dear to the heart of the Virginia housewife. On every whiff floated mince-pie,—mince-pie embryonic, uncompounded; with every sniff there rose, like an exhalation before the imagination, visions of Plum-Pudding—of the Plum-Pudding of Old England,—twin-sister of Roast Beef,—and, with Roast Beef, inseparable attendant and indispensable bulwark of Constitutional Liberty.

It was well.

Nor in stuffed larder alone were discernible the signs of the approaching festival. Christmas was in the very air. Old Dick's mien grew hourly more imposing; his eye, beneath which now trembled no longer Zip alone, but Zip reinforced by double his own strength, hourly more severe. Aunt Phœbe, her head gorgeous in a new bandanna (a present from Mrs. Carter last Christmas, but which had lain folded in her "chist" for the past year),—Aunt Phœbe, chief of the female cohort, and champion pastry-cook of the county, waddled from room to room,—serene, kindly, and puffing,—voluminous with her two hundred pounds, inspecting the work of her subordinates, and giving a finishing touch here and there. Polly, the cook, and her scullion, alone of the household, had no leisure for putting on the Christmas look, busy as they were getting dinner for the coming guests; cooks being, in point of fact, among the few people, white or black, that ever did a full day's work in Virginia in the olden time. But we have changed all that,—so let it pass.

"Dey comin'!" eagerly cried an urchin of color, who,

with twenty companions of both sexes, had had for the past hour their eyes fixed on the lane-gate.

The gate was swinging on its hinges.

With one accord they all assumed the attitude of runners awaiting the signal to start. With feet planted firmly,—shall I say widely?—but no, they are men and brothers now,—with eyes bent upon the gate, but bodies leaning towards the house, they stood for a moment expectant.

The noses of a pair of horses appeared between the gate-posts.

“D’yar dey come! D’yar dey come!” they shouted in chorus; and, with quasi-plantigrade flap of simultaneous feet, they bounded to the rear.

As when Zeus, angry because of the forgotten hecatomb, sends forth, in black, jagged cloud, the glomerated hail, and lays low the labors of the oxen and the hopes of the husbandman.

Or, just as a herd of buffaloes, sniffing the band of Redmen from afar, scurry over the plain.

As though a pack of village curs have inaugurated a conflict, at dead of night, in peaceful, moonlit lane. The combat deepens and stayeth not. But the Summer Boarder, wild with the irony of advertisements, discharges in their midst the casual blunderbuss,—rusty, ineffectual. Instantly hushed is the voice of battle; but multitudinous is the rush of departing paws.

Not otherwise scampered over the Elmington lawn, with nimbly flapping feet, the children of the blameless Ethiopians, as Homer calls them.

The swiftest (for the race is not always to the slow) was first to reach the front steps.

“Dey comin’, Uncle Dick! D’yar dey is in de fur eend o’ de lane!” For that worthy, hearing their hurrying steps, had made his way to the porch, followed by Zip. Zip started back through the door on hearing the tidings.

“Whar you gwine, boy?”

Zip stood as though frozen.

“Ain’t you never gwine to learn no sense? Don’t you know I is de properest pusson to renounce de rival o’ de company?”

Awed by this courtly phrase, no less than by the shining bald head and portly figure that stood before them, the black cohort slowly withdrew, and, straggling back, resumed their position at the lawn-gate to await the arrival of the carriages.

"I see Miss Fanny" (Mrs. Carter). "D'yar she sets, and Marse George" (Mr. C.), "and two more ladies."

"I see her, I see Marse George," chirped the sable chorus in deferential undertones.

"Sarvant, Miss Fanny!" spoke up one older and bolder than the rest. "Sarvant, Miss Fanny; sarvant, Marse George," echoed the dusky maniple.

"How d'ye do, children, how d'ye do!" responded she, affably nodding to a familiar face here and there in the groups that lined the road on either side.

"Yonder Marse Jack!" shouted a little fellow, getting the start of the rest, who were grinning upon Mrs. Carter as though she were their guest. "Yonder Marse Jack a-drivin' de hind carriage!"

Coming up between the rows, I nodded from side to side. The flash of ivories and of smiling eyes seemed to illumine the twilight. Perhaps the light was in my heart—it used to be so,—but let *that* pass, too.

Greetings over, our party dispersed to dress for dinner. The new arrivals were seven or eight in number: Mr. and Mrs. Carter and their daughter Alice,—Alice with the merry-glancing hazel eyes; then Mary Rolfe, demure, reserved, full of subdued enthusiasm, the antithesis of Alice, but "adoring" her—girls will talk so—and adored by her in turn; then the teller of this tale, making five. In addition there were two or three young ladies,—all very charming,—but as they were not destined to play any marked part in our drama, why describe, or even name them?

Only two of our guests had ever before spent Christmas at Elmington,—Mr. and Mrs. Carter. Mrs. Carter was a kind of far-off Virginia cousin of ours, and it was an understood thing between her and my grandfather that she should come down to Elmington every Christmas and matronize his household; else, a houseful of girls, whom he exceedingly enjoyed having around him,

would have been less attainable. And a merrier soul, and one who knew better how to make young people enjoy themselves, could hardly have been found. Mr. Carter, an excellent, silent, sober man of business, could rarely spend more than a week with us; but his jovial spouse never gave us less than a month of her charming chaperoning; and, on one occasion, I remember, the unceasing entreaties of the young people constrained her to prolong her visit and theirs, from week to week, till two full months had elapsed. The net result, direct and indirect, of that particular campaign was four marriages, if I recollect aright,—so that Elmington had an established reputation, among the girls, as a lucky place; of which my grandfather was not a little proud.

“Young ladies,” said he, walking up to Alice and Mary, and putting his arms around their waists, as they stood at a window, after dinner, admiring the moonbeams dancing on the waves,—“young ladies, do you know that Elmington is a very dangerous place?”

“How, dangerous?” asked Mary.

“Shipwrecks?” suggested Alice, nodding towards The River with a smile.

“Yes,” replied he, stooping down and kissing them both with impartial cordiality,—“shipwrecks of hearts.”

“I have lost mine already,” said Alice, laying her head on his shoulder and shutting her eyes, with a languishing smile on her upturned face.

“Little hypocrite!” said he, patting her cheek.

“Only a pat for such a speech?”

“Well, there! So, Alice, your grandmother consented to let us have you this Christmas? It was but right, now that you are grown. And then she lives in such an out-of-the-way neighborhood.”

“Yes, it was very kind in grandmamma to let me come here instead of spending my Christmas with her. She grows deafer every year, and I think—perhaps—I was going to make such a wicked speech!” And Alice dropped her eyes.

“What dreadful thing were you going to say?”

“I was thinking that, perhaps, bawling into one’s

grandmother's ear was not so pleasant a pastime, to a girl, as having—just for a change you know—a young fellow whispering in hers."

"Charley," asked Mr. Whacker, suddenly, that night, as we sat before the library fire, after the newly-arrived guests had retired, "do you know, I can't understand why, in speaking of the ladies you met in Richmond, you never so much as mentioned the name of Alice Carter?"

I tried to catch Charley's eye, but he durst not look me in the face. Seated as I was, therefore, rather behind my innocent relative, I clapped my hand upon my mouth, doubled myself up in my chair, and went through the most violent, though silent contortions of pantomimic laughter. Charley held his eye firmly fixed on my grandfather's face, and affected, though with reddening face, not to observe my by-play.

"D-D-D-Didn't I?"

Any kind of mental perturbation always brought on an attack of stammering with Charley.

"Why, no; and yet I have never seen a more charming girl. She is positively fascinating. Don't you admit it, you cold-hearted young wretch?"

Here, a broad smile from the Don encouraging me to further exertions, my chair tilted, and I recovered myself with a bang.

"What is the matter with you?" asked my grandfather, suddenly turning.

Charley gave me a quick, imploring glance, and I had pity on him. "Give it to him, grandfather; he deserves it, every word,—the woman-hater!"

"To be sure he does. Why, were I at his time of life—hey, Mr. Smith?"

That night, after we had gone to bed, I was just dozing off into dreamland. Charley gave me a sudden dig in the ribs.

"Wasn't I good?" said I, drowsily. But the old boy, turning his back upon me and settling his head upon his pillow, took in a long breath of air; and, breathing it out with a kind of snort, was silent.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"How well the Parson is looking, Mary," said Alice, as she stood before the glass that night, unpinning her collar.

Mary, tired and sleepy as she was, dropped into a chair and shook with half-unwilling laughter.

"What is the Little Thing laughing at?"

"Alice, you are the hardest case I ever knew. Why do you persist in turning the man into ridicule?"

"Who, the Pass'n?" for thus she pronounced the word,—and her merry eyes twinkled.

I doubt whether the reader can guess who the "Pass'n" is. I must explain, therefore, that when I mentioned to the girls, in Richmond, that I had found the Don reading the New Testament, Alice had immediately cried out that now she had it. "He is a Methodist parson in disguise." And upon this theme she had ever since been playing inimitably grotesque variations. Coming down on the boat, notably, she had surpassed herself; and I hear our party disgraced themselves by their hilarity. "Ladies and gentlemen," she had cried out, when first we had come in view of Elmington,—*"ladies and gentlemen,"* said she, leaning out of the carriage window, and declaiming solemnly to the passengers in the rear vehicle, *"in yonder mansion sits meditating, at this moment, Pass'n Smith, the disguised Methodist divine. He is the Whitefield of our day. For generations, no exhorter of such power—especially with sentimental young girls and lonesome widows— Will some one be so good as to administer restoratives to the Fat Lady? She seems on the verge of— Where was I?"* And so she went on, her young heart ceaselessly bubbling over with freshness and high spirits.

"Ridicule the Pass'n!" said Alice, dropping into her friend's lap. "Far from me the profane idea." And she smoothed back from Mary's brow her loosened hair.

"In the first place, Alice, it is perfectly absurd for you to say he is a parson; and even if he were," she continued, after a sharp struggle with her rising laughter,—“even if he were studying with a view to the ministry, I don't see that he should be made fun of on that account. To my mind,—and you ought to think so too, Alice,—to my mind there is no nobler spectacle than that of a young man deliberately turning his back upon all the allurements that lead astray so many of his comrades, and devoting himself, in the very vigor of his manhood and in all the glory of his youthful strength, to the service of his God. But as for the Don,—Mr. Smith I mean,—I think he is about as far from being a parson as he well could be. Don't you remember how, when I first met him, I said I was afraid of him? Well, that feeling grows on me. He may have his passions well under control, but, you may depend upon it, they would be terrible if ever they got the mastery over him. Did you ever notice his teeth, how strong and even they are, and as white as ivory? but do you know that, at times, when he smiles in that peculiar way of his, they seem to me to glitter through his moustache like—like—”

“Is the Little Thing afraid the Pass'n will bite her? Twould be a wicked shepherd to bite a little lamb. And if he ever does such a thing,” she continued, “you go straight and tell your mamma.” And she dropped her head on Mary's shoulder and stuck out her mouth like a three-year-old child.

“Incorrigible scamp!” cried Mary, between laughter-kisses that, like bubbles, exploded as they touched those pouting lips. “But, Alice, will you never be serious?”

“Serious?” replied Alice, rising. “I was never more serious in my life. It wouldn't be right.”

“What wouldn't be right?”

“For you to let the Pass'n bite you, without telling your mother,—and with those glittering teeth too! Think of it! Glittering teeth and starry eyes! Imagine! Most improper, upon my word!”—and she gave a toss of her shapely little head. “Mary,” said Alice,

dropping again, suddenly, into her laughing friend's lap,—“Mary, look me in the eyes!”

From her fine honest face, as well as from her voice,—both changeful as the dolphin's hues,—had vanished in an instant all trace of raillery. Mary looked up with a smile half serious, half inquiring.

“Well?”

“Straight in the eyes!” repeated Alice, lifting her friend's chin on the tip of her forefinger.

“I am looking.”

“Mary,” began Alice, leaning forward, and with that same forefinger daintily depressing the tip of Mary's nose, “are — you — quite — sure — that — you — are — not—”

“Not what?”

“Falling in love with Mr. Smith?”

“Alice, what can have put that idea into your head?”

“That sounds more like a question than an answer to a question. Look me in the eyes and say no,—if you can.”

“Well, *no*, then!”

“No fluttering *here*, when he approaches? no quick breathing when he speaks to you? no pit-a-pat?”

“No pit-a-pat,—no *anything*! Will that do?”

“Well, I suppose it will have to do,—at least for the present.”

“How ‘for the present’?”

“Never mind,” said Alice, rising; “and now for another question. Is the Don, so far as you can see, falling in love with *you*?”

“With *me*?” cried Mary, with genuine surprise. “What, pray, will you ask next? Whether, for example, I do not perceive that Mr. Frobisher is enamoured of me? No, you will not ask *that*. *Dear Charles*,—well, he is a nice fellow, I must admit,—and would let you do all the talking.” And she gave Alice a squeeze, as girls will do, when talking sweethearts among themselves.

“Mr. Frobisher! Why are you continually harping on him? He has never said a dozen words to me. But mark my words, that Enigma is interested in you. He

showed it to-day at dinner. You know, my dear, when the humor strikes you, you talk beautifully—"

"I don't compare with you, Alice."

"Never mind about me. This meeting has not been called with a view to organizing a Mutual-Admiration Society. *You* are the subject of this little pow-wow. Now, to-day, at dinner—well, I don't like to sit here and flatter you to your face, but I saw very plainly that the Reverend Mr.—I beg your pardon, the Don, was enraptured with your unconscious eloquence."

"*Eloquence*, Alice?" And Mary flushed with ill-concealed delight.

"Yes, Little Dumpling, eloquence."

"Really?"

"That's the charm of the thing, goosey; your words flow from you so easily, that you are unconscious how lovely your language often is. Then, of course, as none of us know the sound of our own voices, you are hardly aware how low and musical your voice is."

"Alice," said Mary, gravely, "you are making fun of me. You have never said anything like this to me before. It is not kind,—it really isn't!" And her lips quivered.

"You little goose! Not to know me any better than that! Well, to-day you became so much interested in some subject you were discussing with Mr. John Whacker that you did not observe, for some time, that every one at the table was listening to you; and then, when you discovered that you 'had the floor,' you blushed furiously and stopped talking."

"Yes, I remember; it made me feel so foolish!"

"Well, you know, my love, I am very proud of you, and so I was looking around to see what others thought of you. I give you my word, I nearly exploded when I caught sight of the Don. There he sat, with an oyster on the end of his fork poised midway between his plate and his mouth, with his eyes riveted on you. Put this down in your book, Mary,—this,—as a maxim on love: 'Whenever a man forgets the way to his mouth his heart's in danger.'"

"I will," said Mary, shaking with laughter.

"Yes," continued Alice, standing before the glass and taking down her hair, "you have a streak of genius, that's the truth; but it is not the whole truth."

"Give me the rest of it."

Alice, instead of replying, made a face at herself in the glass; then, folding her arms across her bosom and swaying from side to side two or three times, sailed off in a waltz around the room.

"The trouble with you, my dear, is simply this,"—and she stood before her friend with arms akimbo,—
"you are devoid of common sense." And off she capered again, this time in the rhythm of the polka. "Oh, I'm so happy!" cried she, clasping her hands and rolling up her eyes.

"Because I have no common sense?"

"Because I have so much! I've lots! *Oceans!*" And she spread out her arms. Catching sight of her own waving arms in the mirror, she, like the kaleidoscope, changed in an instant. Standing on her left foot, she described, with the extended toe of her right, an elaborate semicircle, and ended with a profound courtesy, her young face corrugated, meanwhile, with that professional grin of the equestrienne, which, among the horsical, passes for a smile. Turning then to Mary, she repeated the movement. "Behold," cried she, drawing herself up to her full height,—
"behold the Empress of the Arena! The Champion Bare-back Rider of the World!"

"I don't know so much about the champion part of it, but of the bare back there can be little doubt."

"Well said, Little Dumpling! I must admit that my costume is rather meagre."

"Alice, you ought to be able to explain it if anybody can,—how do people come to be 'privileged characters,' as they are called? You do whatever you please, and cut all sorts of crazy antics, and no one ever thinks you foolish, or even undignified; and then, you say whatever you think, yet no one can get angry with you. You tell me, to my face, that I am destitute of common sense—"

"Totally, that's a fact."

"And yet I am not the least bit vexed?"

"The simplest thing imaginable. Listen, and I will explain. As to the crazy antics, as you are pleased to term my joyous, lamb-like friskings, of course you cannot expect me to have the face to stand up here and say that they do not offend, because of the bewitching, inborn grace which characterizes my every movement?"

"Naturally."

"Of course. And you will naturally pardon my not alluding to what I can't help."

"Poor thing!"

"Of course. I was born so; and that's the end of that. Now, as to your not being hurt by my telling you that plain truth about yourself—"

"My destitution as regards—"

"Common sense—yes,—I think you yourself must understand it."

"Because you told me, first, that I had a streak of genius,—flatterer?"

"Precisely; I credit you with bullion, and you are not worried that I should deny you the small change of every-day life. You see I am as deep as Machiavelli,—in other words, as full of common sense as an egg is of meat. Lucy will not reach home," said she, abruptly veering off from the line of their talk, as she seated herself on the edge of the bed, "till the middle of January."

"No; I am so sorry. What made you think of her?"

"Because I wish she were here right now."

"Why, pray?"

"Because, from what I saw in Richmond, the Don might devote himself to her instead of you."

"Thank you for wishing to rob me of an admirer, as you pretend to deem him!"

"No, I am glad she is not here. She is so pure and earnest, so single-minded and devoted, that I should tremble to see her exposed to such a danger."

"And I am so—"

"You are what you are, my dear, and I would not have you other. But there is but one Lucy in the

world. You know it and I know it, and neither of us would think of comparing ourselves with her."

"Yes, Lucy is a real madonna."

"And, somehow, I am not,—you may speak for yourself. Yes, I am glad she is not here. I'll tell you, Mary: I wish he would fall in love with me,—I've got so much hard sense that I should never think of reciprocating. However," added she, resting her head in her hand, while her elbow and fair, plump arm sank in the pillow, "I am not so sure. I, too, am human. Perhaps it would be too much for me. He is tall," she continued, looking dreamily into space,—“he is distinguished-looking!—so brave!—so mysterious!—perhaps I haven't as much sense as I thought,”—and she seemed to nod,—“and his teeth are so like stars! and his rows of eyes are so even and white! glitter so!—Am I asleep? Mary, my love,” cried she, bouncing off the bed, “are you going to talk all night? Talk on,—but I'll tell you what I am going to do. I shall straightway put on my little N. G.,—the toggery, to wit, of repose; and then I shall fall on my little knees and say my little prayers; which done, I shall curl up my little self in my little bed, and know no more till the rising-bell. One word with you, however. Mary, do you know what all I have been saying to you means?”

“I don't know what any of it means,—not one word; nor do you, I should imagine.”

“Then listen! All that I have said and done and danced to-night means this, and this only. The Pass'n is going to fall in love with you. That's the Pass'n's affair, and shows his good taste. Now, who on earth is the Pass'n? Do you see? Well, don't you go and fall in love with him, now mind! *don't*,—that's a good, wise girl. Good-night!”

CHAPTER XXV.

I WILL not suppose that any of my readers are superficial persons; and only superficial persons need be told that Alice Carter was a young woman of unusually strong judgment and sound sense. And, further: all persons like her are similarly characterized. Doubtless, a sense of humor is not necessary to the chemist or the naturalist or the mathematician,—to one pursuing a special branch of knowledge; but in that science of sciences, the knowledge of men and things, no eminence is possible without it. 'Tis the blind who fall into pits; and the man who cannot see the absurd in others can in nowise himself escape being ridiculous. I know of but one bird with long ears; and he looks exceeding wise; but let him but venture forth from the twilight of his hiding-place into the full glare of day, and the first school-boy that passes whistling by, shall knock him on the head. And so, among men, the most solemn owl is ever the most solemn ass.

Yes, our little Alice of the merry-glancing hazel eyes was a wise virgin and of exceeding tact; but when she warned her friend against falling in love with the Don, she blundered,—blundered most grievously when she planted in Mary's mind the idea that he was not indifferent to her. She loved Mary dearly, with a love securely based on similarity of principles and dissimilarity of temperament, and cemented by the closest association from their very infancy. She admired her, too,—admired her gifts, the unusual range of her womanly culture, her enthusiasm for all that was high and noble, the glowing beauty of her language when she discoursed of anything that kindled her blood. At such times she would sit gazing upon Mary's face, illumined as it was with a beautiful enthusiasm, and feel that she herself was almost despicable. Yet a reaction always came. Mary was not what is called practical. Her head was among the stars, as it were, while

her feet were stumbling along the earth; and Alice revenged herself upon her goddess, for her enforced worship, by playing upon her foibles and blunders with an incessant spray of delicate and sparkling raillery. Even the school-girl love-affairs that they had had when about twelve or thirteen years of age had been characteristic of the two friends. Mary's youth rejoiced in the aristocratic name of Arthur, while Alice's lad was known as plain Harry. Arthur was curly-haired and pale of face, and generally had, as he sauntered to school, some novel or other concealed about his person. Harry was a brisk, bullet-headed chap, champion knucks' player of the school; while, at mumble-peg, his stubby, upturned nose allowed him to rise superior even to defeat.

"I can't see, Alice, how you can fancy a boy with a pug nose," said Mary, one day.

"Harry's nose turns up, that's true; but *so did he*, yesterday, and with his umbrella, which kept you and me dry, while he ran home in the rain. *Somebody else* was afraid of getting his *curls* wet. I'll tell you what it is, Mary, *I* like a boy that carries my books for me and gives me peaches and French candy and oranges and things; but *you* want one with a novelly name and a 'chiselled nose,' as you call it,—a *pretty* boy, in fact." All which Mary denied with some heat, and they had a tiff and "didn't speak" for five long and weary minutes. Alice phrased the same idea differently some years later. "Mary, I'll tell you the difference between you and myself. Your idea of a husband is a man whom *you* can adore; mine must adore *me*."

Alice blundered,—blundered through over-zeal for her friend's welfare. She knew Mary's nature in its every recess; she erred through not knowing human nature as well. She was only eighteen; hence her knowledge of mankind was special rather than general. She knew the exaltation of Mary's imagination, and felt the danger of her fervid fancy's laying hold of such a man as the Don, and converting him into a demi-god by the alchemy of her fresh, girlish heart. But generalization is not a trait of the feminine mind. When

we hear that some one admires us, we—all of us—instinctively give that person credit for good taste and discernment,—*that*, she of the hazel eyes overlooked. Now, good taste and discernment are admirable traits; how, then, other things being favorable, can we help admiring our admirers?

"Good-night!" answered Mary; and the two fair heads lay side by side, deep-sunk in vast, beruffled pillows. Alice, fatigued by the day's journey, fell asleep almost immediately. Her companion, though her eyes were closed, lay thinking. Ah, little Alice, you have sadly blundered! Mary is thinking of what you have said to her—ransacking her brain for confirmation of your suggestion. "Yes, I did remark his looking at me several times at dinner; but what of that? People can look at other people without being in love with them. And—yes, I did think his eyes wore a very intense look; but then they always glow like coals. How beautiful they are!" [Oh, Alice! Alice!!] "terribly beautiful! Oh, if he but hated you!" And she shivered.

Lying, as she was, locked in Alice's arms, the nervous, rippling movement of her body slightly disturbed the latter's slumbers; but she merely drew a long breath and exhaled it again with force,—taking a fresh hold, as it were, on sleep.

"Pshaw! it's all nonsense! Alice forgets what we all agreed to in Richmond. Lucy Poythress was obviously his favorite. Of course she was. Everybody remarked it. I never saw anything like the suddenness of the fancy he took for her. Well, Lucy will reach the neighborhood in a few weeks, and then we shall see. I wonder—no, I cannot think that of him. 'Out of sight, out of mind,'—no, that's impossible; whatever he may be, he is not fickle. Let me think. I do recall that he seemed to bow a shade lower to me than to the others when we left the parlor; but what of that? Bows must differ like everything else; one must be lower than the rest. And he is so strong, I suppose he hardly knew that he almost hurt my hand." "Stuff!" cried she aloud, with emphasis; whirling out of Alice's arms and changing her position.

Many men, in many lands, Poor Thing, have tried that method of changing the current of their thoughts, and have failed. The chronometer goes ticking on, lay it how you will; and so the human heart; but that, alas, unlike the tireless watch, throbs fiercest when 'tis broken.

Alice gave the half-conscious moan of disturbed sleep; and Mary resumed her meditations, going, again and again, over the same ground. At last youth and fatigue asserted their claims, and she fell asleep and slept for hours; then suddenly sprang up with a sharp cry.

"What's the matter?" asked Alice, in terror.

"Oh, I had such a fearful dream!"

"You did?" said Alice, dropping back upon her pillow. "You frightened me so-o-o." And she was asleep again.

Mary had dreamt that she was walking alone on a road through a dark forest, when suddenly she heard, behind her, the clatter of a horse's hoofs. Looking around in terror, she beheld a Knight in full armor, with visor down, mounted on a powerful black charger, and riding furiously. The Knight seemed to be making full at her, and she stood transfixed with fright, and rooted to the ground. As he came up to her, he did not slacken his speed, but bending to the right, and encircling her waist with his mighty arm, lifted her from the ground, and, without an effort, placed her before him on the charger's neck. On, on, they rushed for miles and miles; but the horseman spake never a word, nor, for very terror, could she utter a cry. At last they emerged into a bright, moonlit plain, and there, standing before them, was the figure of a young girl. She turned her head at the sound of the charger's hoofs, and the moon, shining full on her face, revealed the features of Lucy. "Aha! it is she!" cried the Knight, breaking silence for the first time. 'Twas the voice of the Don! And tossing his trembling captive disdainfully to the ground, he stooped once more, and, seizing Lucy, sped on as before. Oh, Alice! Alice!! Alice!!!

CHAPTER XXVI.

NEXT morning, as the two girls were tripping downstairs, Mary said to herself, "Now I shall observe the Don narrowly, and see whether there is anything in what Alice says. Perhaps there may be some little foundation for her opinion." Entering the breakfast-room in this frame of mind, it is not to be wondered at that, as she saluted one after another of the company, her eyes suddenly gave forth kindlier beams as they met those of the Don. Very likely the Don did not make any such comparison. He may not have remarked that the smile she gave him was sweeter or sweetest; but he felt that it was sweet.

There were only two vacant seats at the table when the two girls entered. One, at my grandfather's right, he had expressly reserved for Alice, who had entirely captivated him the evening before by her sparkling gayety. The other was next the Don's, and this Mary took. That sweet smile merited response of some sort, and his attentions to his fair neighbor were assiduous and delicate. He was always courteous, but, certainly, rather constrained; now, his manner seemed to her singularly gentle. What was thawing him out? Perhaps—well, at any rate—

"Thank you," cooed she, in that soft, high-bred tongue of Richmond,—*"thank you,"*—in requital for hot waffle, weaving wreathed smile, entangler of the hearts of men. Could he, the friendless one and solitary, could he be unmoved? And so, smile answered smile, and interest brought interest, making it compound; and every school-boy knows how fast that counts up.

* * * * *

Yes, it was too much; five or six pages of *Able-Analysis*, showing just what these two young people felt, and why they felt it; and so, I passed a pen across the whole. It makes the chapter shorter; but even that has its possible advantages. The fact is, I am not quite

sure that I know what they did think and feel; for was not the Don an Enigma? and was not Mary a woman?

After all, what is the use of all this microscopic anatomy in tracking the progress of heart-affairs? It seems to me that falling in love is as elementary a process as sitting down on an ice-pond. The rub is *how not* to do it. If the novelists would but tell us *that*! Fortunately for me, I am not called on to do this, as I am not a novelist, but a bushwhackerish philosopher instead. And then—have I defrauded you, fair reader?—this is not a love-story! When I sat down to write it, I resolved to exclude, most rigidly, from its pages, all allusion to the tender passion; but, somehow, though against my will, my personages could not be kept free from its toils. My error was in bringing them together to spend Christmas in a Virginia country-house. The thing cannot be remedied, now, without an entire change of plot; so I shall have to let it go as it is. But the reader must credit the whole of this Episode of Love, which has forced itself into a theme of a different nature, to Alice Carter. Without her assistance I could not have written one word of it. She and Charley, to be entirely honest, are the real authors of this book. They have furnished most of the facts; I am to pocket all the glory.

To show the part Alice has had in the matter, I will mention, by way of example, a conversation we had years after the occurrences herein described,—less, in fact, than eighteen months ago. We were talking of the good old times,—*Consule Planco*,—and happened to speak of this particular Christmas at Elmington, and especially of the week that preceded Christmas Eve.

“Did you know as early as that, that a love-affair was brewing between Mary and the Don?”

“Of course; at any rate, I feared it. You know how harum-scarum I was in those days?”

“I do,” I replied, “if harum-scarum means irresistible.”

“You resisted me, at any rate; but, as I was going to remark, I had the regulation number of eyes about

my person, and couldn't well help seeing what lay straight before me."

"I saw nothing!"

"Ah, but you are a man! and remember that there are none so blind as those who can't see!"

"Then you think the affair was well under weigh before the end of the first week?"

"With the Don, yes; and Mary was far more interested than she would allow herself to believe."

"Do you suppose that she was aware of the critical state of the Don's affections?"

"Of course she was; don't you know that a woman always perceives that a man is falling in love with her long before he finds it out himself?"

"Not to add," I rejoined, "that she often perceives it when the man never *does* find it out himself. By the way, why do women always express surprise at a proposal, as I am told they invariably do?"

"Oh, that is to gain time; but rest assured, the surprise is about as real as that felt by a spider when a fly, after buzzing about her web for a time, and lightly grazing first one thread and then another, at last puts himself in a position where he may be made available."

"Poor fly!"

Upon the authority, then, of Alice, who holds the position of Editor-in-chief of the Love-department of this work, I may assure the reader that by the time that one week had passed over the heads of our party at Elmington this was the state of things:

Mary was sure that the Don loved her, and believed that she was fancy-free. The Don was aware, no doubt, of the state of his own affections, and was, we will suppose,—for there is no way of knowing,—in perplexing doubt as to the condition of Mary's. Alice knew more than either of them; while upon me, the teller of this tale, their various nods and becks and wreathed smiles had been entirely lost.

I knew no more of what was going forward than Zip did of the amours of Uncle Toby and the Widow Wadman.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CHRISTMAS EVE had come, and, as usual, the holidays had been officially ushered in by a noble fire of hickory logs. A deep mass of ruddy coals was glowing upon the vast hearth of the Hall. Upon these had been cast a hamper of chosen oysters. The guests (it was the way at Elmington) were expected to rake them out, every man for himself and sweetheart, which gave a delightful informality to the proceedings. As soon as the roasting was well under weigh, two enormous, ancestral bowls, one of eggnog, the other of apple-toddy, were brought in. Later, there was to be dancing. A dozen or so of our neighbors and friends were in the habit of dropping in on us, on these occasions, to help us make merry.

"And now, grandfather," said I, "it is time to bring out the old Guarnerius."

"The old what?" asked the Don, quickly.

"His old Guarnerius violin; Guarnerius was a celebrated maker of violins," I explained.

What was the matter with Charley? Why did he purse up his mouth and give that inaudible whistle?

"Ah,—and Mr. Whacker has one of these old instruments?"

"Yes; and he is as tender with it as a mother with her first-born. He allows it to be brought out only during the Christmas holidays; though he used to let Monsieur Villemain play on it. The genuine ones are very rare and dear," I added.

Another silent whe-e-ew from Charley.

"Oh, I should suppose so," replied the Don.

"What did you say your Guarnerius cost you, grandfather?"

That was a question I asked every Christmas Eve, when the violin was brought out; and always with the same result.

"*That*," replied the old gentleman, smiling and addressing the Don, "is a piece of information I have never given to my friends. You see, when I was a young man—".

We all knew what was coming,—the story that my grandfather always told to strangers when his Guarnerius was brought out for inspection. It was rather a long story,—how he took lessons from a very promising young artist, who took to gambling and drinking, and had, therefore, to sell his beloved violin to his pupil,—and how the young man grieved at giving it up, etc., etc., etc.

"So saying," concluded Mr. Whacker, "he wrung my hand and hurried out of the room."

"OUCH!" cried Charley, letting fall upon the hearth, at the same time, a large oyster and the knife with which he was opening it.

If there runs upon the people's highway a hopelessly slow coach, it is your writer of English grammars. When will they deem this interjection respectable enough to introduce into their works? If never, how is the boy of the future to parse my works? Surely, it is worth any half-dozen of their genteel alases, or their erudite alackadays! Look at it! Ouch! How much body! What an expressive countenance! What character in its features! Hebrew verbs have genders; and don't you see that ouch is masculine? What lady would use it? Nay, it is more than masculine,—it is manly!

See those two boys,—the one with a strong pin fixed in the toe of his shoe,—the other absorbed in his lesson, and sitting in an unguarded attitude. Up goes the foot!

"Ouch!"

The word is more than manly,—it is stoical. Stoical, did I say? 'Tis heroic!

For does not the lad say in that one breath, with Byron's dying gladiator, that he consents to start, but conquers agony? He means, as clearly as though he had used the whole dictionary, "I am no girl. I didn't scream. It didn't hurt, neither. I just wanted

to have you understand that I knew you were fooling with the seat of my trousers."

All this those four letters mean; and yet this is their first appearance in any serious literary work!

To this masterly interjection did Mr. Charles Frobisher give vent; and he meant, of course, "I have cut my finger with this confounded knife, opening this confounded oyster; but don't disturb yourselves, ladies and gentlemen, 'tis a small affair." Accordingly he rose, left the room, and soon returned with his finger bandaged.

"Oh, I am so sorry!" said Alice.

"Badly cut?" inquired my grandfather.

"It is nothing," said Charley.

"But how annoying," added the old gentleman. "Your left hand, too! So that you will not be able to play for the dancers this evening."

Charley looked at the bandaged finger with a thoughtful air, and shook his head.

Charley, with all his supposed aversion to the fair sex, was ready, at any time, to play all night to the dancing of a party of girls, and the young people were much chagrined at the accident to his finger. True, Herr Waldteufel had offered his services at the piano; but they wanted a fiddler on Christmas Eve; and the question was raised whether one could not be found among the negroes. But it turned out that a "revival" had recently swept over the county, and both my grandfather's fiddlers had "got religion." One of them had, in fact, already begun to preach; and, in his first sermon, had taken high conservative ground as to the future state of such as drew the bow and repented not. So, as the tyro to whom the new parson had sold his instrument was not yet up to the mark, it seemed certain that we would have to trip it to the less inspiring strains of the piano.

"I vill blay for de yoong beebles till daylight doaf abbear," quoth the Herr, who was very near the mammoth bowl of apple-toddy.

But just as this thorough-going proposal fell from the Professor's well-moistened lips, there was heard the

clattering of hoofs on the frozen ground. There was a stir among the darkies, around and in the door-way, and on the steps of the Hall; for, as was the custom in the olden days, whenever there was any conviviality going forward in the "Great-House," the negroes had crowded about all the doors and windows whence a glimpse of the festivities was to be had; for they knew very well there was "mo' toddy in dat d'yar big bowl dan de white folks gwine 'stroy, let alone de eggnog."

I hasten to remark that this mysterious cavalier, so darkly galloping through night and frost, was none other than Mr. William Jones,—Billy for short,—the young fellow of whom we have heard before, and who was, at this time, a student at the University. A dozen sable youngsters seized his reins, ambitious of the honor of riding his horse to the stable; and as he dismounted and approached the densely-packed steps, he was assailed by a chorus of joyous, friendly voices.

"Dat you, Marse Billy? Lord 'a' mussy, how de chile done growed, to-be-sho! Jess like he pa, too!"

The light was streaming upon his cheery, manly face. "Why, how do you do, Aunt Polly?"

"I 'clare 'fo' Gaud de chile know me, and in de dark, too!" And Aunt Polly doubled herself up and chuckled blissfully.

"Know you! why, it was only last October that I went off to the University!"

"Dat so, Marse Billy. How we old people does forget, to-be-sho!"

I may remark, here, that before the late war it was very gratifying to a middle-aged negro to be thought old. There was on every farm a considerable proportion of the ladies and gentlemen of color who had voted themselves too old or too infirm to labor. Their diseases,—they were all diseased,—while masking their malignity behind such empirical euphemisms as rheumatiz or misery in de chist, baffled all diagnosis, and were invariably incurable; for who can minister to a mind diseased with that most obstinate of ailments, an aversion, to wit, to putting in movement the muscles of one's own body? There was, so to speak, an *Hôpital*

des Invalides on every farm; and on my grandfather's the *emeriti* and *emeritæ* were in strong force.

And truly it was a pleasant sight, provided you were not a political economist or a philanthropist, to walk among the cabins, on a bright autumn afternoon, and see the good souls sitting, sunning themselves, and hear the serene murmur of their prattle, broken, ever and anon, by some mellow burst of careless laughter.

It was tranquillity such as this, I fancy, that Homer must have observed in the old men of his day. Don't you remember when there was a truce, and Priam was standing upon the battlements,—what book was it?—but no matter,—and he sent for Helen to come and point out to him the various Greek heroes who stood beneath the walls; and how she had to pass by a knot of ancient men, and how she amazed them by her beauty? The days of toil and sweat and wounds, for them, at least, were past; and they, too, had come to catch, from the turrets, a glimpse of wide-ruling Agamemnon and Ulysses of many wiles; of the brawn of Ajax; and of Diomede, equal to the immortal gods. And there they sat, hobnobbing and a-twittering—so the master says—low and sweet as so many cicadas—let us say katydids—from greenwood tree.

"No wonder," they chirped, "the Greeks and Trojans" (*they* were no longer either Greeks or Trojans,—they were aged men, merely) "have ceaselessly contended, for now nearly ten years, about her,—for she is divinely beautiful!"

I think it must have been my childhood's experiences of plantation life that caused me to be so profoundly touched by this masterly passage; for hardly elsewhere, in this grimly struggling world of ours, could just such scenes have been witnessed. Just think of it, for a moment! Here, throughout Virginia, there were, in those days, on every farm, three or four, or a dozen, or a score of servants, who had rested from their labors at an age when one may say the struggle glows fiercest with the European races. A roof was over their heads, a bright fire crackled on their hearths. Their food, if plain, was abundant. And

there was not a possibility that these things should ever fail them. No wonder they used to rival the ἄσβεστος γέλως that burst from the ever-serene gods, when lame Vulcan, with his ungainly hobble, went to and fro among them, officiously passing the nectar.

That sonorous mellowness of unalloyed laughter we shall never hear again. But never mind,—let it pass!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Yes, let it pass. There was music in that laughter, doubtless, but it cost us too dear. I think we Virginians* are agreed as to that,—more than agreed,—yet we cannot bring ourselves to look as others do, upon the state of things which rendered it possible. As one man, we rejoice that slavery is dead; but even the victors in the late struggle—the magnanimous among them, at least—will hardly find fault with us if we drop a sentimental tear, as it were, upon its tomb. A reasonable man is glad that an aching tooth is well out of his mouth; but to the autocratic dentist who should pull it out by force, his gratitude would not be boisterous; and then, after all, it leaves a void. But cheer up, brother Virginians, listen to your Bushwhackerish bard while he chaunts you a lay. He would have his say; but he will be good and kind. He would not willingly bore you; and hence, ever thoughtful and considerate, he serves up his rhetoric in a separate course. Skip this chapter, then, if you will. You will find the story continued in the next.

Yes, it is all true enough, I admit. It was but the other day, so to speak, that the first shipload of negroes was landed on the shores of a continent peopled by a race which, after all has been said, remain the most interesting of savages, and who, if not heroes, have easily

* Obviously, as often elsewhere, Mr. Whacker here says *Virginians*, instead of *Southerners*, to avoid all semblance of sectional feeling.

become heroic under the magicians' wands of Cooper and of Longfellow. That shipload and its successors have become millions; while the genius of a Barnum scarce suffices to bring together enough Redskins to make a Knickerbocker holiday. The descendant of the naked black, whose tribe, on the Gold Coast, still trembles before a Fetish, rustles, beneath fretted ceilings, in the robes of a bishop; while some chief of the kindred, perhaps, of Tecumseh, shivers on the wind-swept plains, under the fluttering rags of a contract blanket. His half-naked squaw hugs her pappoose to her bosom, and flees before the sabres of our cavalry; but her more deeply-tinted sister struts, beflounced, the spouse of a senator. In one word, the race which the Anglo-Saxons found on this continent remained free, and perished; the people they imported and enslaved, multiplied and flourished. I do not feel myself the *Œdipus* to solve this riddle of modern morals; but, with my people, I fail to see the consistency of Victor Hugo* for example, who could whine over the fate of John Brown,—hanged for an attempt to achieve the liberty of the negro through murder,—but who, when Captain Jack stood at the foot of the gallows, made no sign. Captain Jack, he too, through murder, sought to maintain his ancestral right to independence—nay, existence—and a few acres of wretched lava-beds. The distempered fancy of the first saw, as he gazed upon the corpses of the fellow-citizens of Washington, of Jefferson, and of Henry, countless dusky legions rushing to his rescue,—the clear eye of the other showed him forty millions pouring down upon his less than a hundred braves, to avenge the death of Canby; and yet he slew him. John Brown is a hero, his name is a legend, his tomb a shrine; but where are thy wretched bones slung away, poor Jack? Hadst thou been fair, and dwelt in Lacedæmon, in Xerxes' days, the name of Leonidas shone not now in solitary glory adown the ages; wert thou living now, and of sable hue, thou mightest be sitting at the desk of Calhoun. Alas!

* Written, doubtless, before the death of "The Master."—*Ed.*

alas! that thou shouldst have been of neutral shade; for how couldst thou be a man and a brother, being only copper-colored?

But leaving these knotty points of ethical casuistry to the philanthropists, I reiterate that I think that the picture I have drawn of certain aspects of slavery, as it existed in Virginia, reveals its fatal weakness. That weakness consisted in the fact that it realized the ideal set forth in Victor Hugo's "*Les Misérables*." That eloquent work of the erratic French dreamer is one long and passionate protest against the sorrows and sufferings of the poor. In those sorrows and sufferings he finds the source of all the crimes that dishonor humanity. Now, as things existed with us, poverty sufficiently grinding to produce crime was actually unknown; so that our little world was just the world that he sighs for.

Victor Hugo plumes himself, I believe, upon never having learned the gibberish that the English call their language. Therefore, as I do not design having this work translated into the various modern languages (why should I, forsooth, since by the time your day rolls round the aforesaid gibberish will be the only tongue spoken by mankind?) he will never have the pain of seeing himself ranked among the upholders of slavery. Whatever he might say, however, it is very clear that no state of things heretofore existing has so well fulfilled the conditions of his ideal of society. It is no fault of mine if his ideal be absurd.*

* In my capacity of Bushwhacker, I make it a matter of business to laugh whenever I feel like it. I felt like it when, on reading the above, this parallelism occurred to me: the hero of the "*Misérables*"—Jean Valjean—is a thief. Now, holds our author, whenever a man is so unfortunate as to be a thief, no blame should be attached to him,—and he puts it about thus: "A thief is not a thief. Nor a crime. He is a product. A fact. A titanic fact. A thief is a man who hears the cry of a child. It is his child. It is a cry for bread. Society gives him a stone. Effacement of his rectitude. He appropriates society's wallet. And serves society right; for 'tis society has made him a thief."

Leaving to some coming man the task and the credit of removing from society all stain, by discovering who or what made society a thief-maker, 'tis this that moved my Bushwhackerish soul to smile: this Jean Valjean, whom society is so wicked in producing, turns out to be a better man than any other man-ever was, is, or shall be. So we, under our

For I fear me much this is no ideal world we live in.

But ah, what a lotus-dream we were a-dreaming, when from out our blue sky the bolt of war fell upon us! We lived in a land in which no one was hungry, none naked, none a-cold; where no man begged, and no man was a criminal, no woman fell—from necessity; where no one asked for bread, and all, even the slaves, could give it; where Charity was unknown, and in her stead stood Hospitality, with open doors. What tidings we had, meanwhile, of the things of the outer world, made us cherish all the more fondly the quietude of our Sleepy Hollow. The nations, had they not filled the air for a century past with the murmur of their unrest? Revolutions, rebellions, barricades, bread-riots,—agrarianism, communism, the frowning hosts of capital and labor—the rumor of these grisly facts and grislier phantoms reached us, but from afar, and as an echo merely; and lulled, by our exemption from these ills, into a fatal security, we failed to perceive the breakers upon which we were slowly but surely drifting. The lee-shore upon which our ship was so somnolently rocking was nothing less than bankruptcy. Spendthrifts, we dreamed that our inheritance was too vast ever to be dissipated; nay, we fondly imagined that we were adding to our substance. Did not our statesmen, our Able-Editors, unceasingly assure us that we were the richest people on the globe, and growing daily richer? And what had been that inheritance? A noble, virgin land, unsurpassed, all things considered, anywhere,—a land that

very sinful system, would seem to have prepared for the elective franchise a whole people lately buried in heathenism, without, as it were, half trying. Nor does this claim rest merely upon that braggartism so peculiarly Southern. The very best people on the other side—nay, the people who, by their own admission, embrace all the culture and virtue of the country—have been the first to give us this meed of praise,—yet it is notorious that very few white men are yet, with all their Bacons, and Sydneys, and Hampdens, and Jeffersons to enlighten them, qualified for that august function. Nay, even in France herself, though she is, as Victor Hugo says,—and he should know,—the mother and the father, and the uncle and the aunt, and the brother and the sister of civilization, I believe there are Frenchmen not yet fitted to wield the ballot,—among whom, I doubt not, some profane persons would make so bold as to class the illustrious rhapsodist himself.

cost us nothing beyond the beads of Captain Smith and the bullets of his successors,—a land which no mortgages smothered, no tax-gatherer devoured. But smothered and devoured it was, and by our slaves.

It is doubtful whether slavery was ever, at any stage of the world's history, wise, from an economical point of view, though it was, of course, in one aspect, in the interest of humanity, when, at some prehistoric period, men began to enslave rather than butcher their prisoners of war. But it seems very clear, that if the conditions of any society were ever such that its greatest productive force could only be realized through the restraints and constraints of slavery, then that slavery must needs have been absolute and pitiless. No half-and-half system will suffice. Severe and continuous labor is endured by no man who can avoid it. But labor, continuous and severe, is the price paid by the great mass of mankind for the mere privilege of being counted in the census; so terrible is that struggle for existence, of the Darwinian dispensation, which, whether we be Darwinians or not, we must needs live under. This, in our dreamland, we quietly ignored. The political economists are all agreed that from the sharpest toil little more can be hoped for than the barest support of the toilers; and we were not ignorant of political economy. But is there not an exception to every rule? And were we not that exception? In *our* favored nook, at least, the cold dicta of science should not hold sway. And so our toilers did half work,—and got double rations. In one word, we spent more than we made. And although we could not be brought to see this, it became very plain when the war came and settled our accounts for us; for I venture to assert that in April, 1865, the State of Virginia was worth intrinsically less than when, in 1607, Captain John Smith and his young gentlemen landed at Jamestown. In other words, there had been going on for two hundred and fifty years a process the reverse of accumulation. For that length of time we had been living on our principal,—the native wealth of the soil. While, in other parts of the country, the struggle for existence had caused

barrenness to bloom, the very rocks to grow fat, in ours the struggle for ease had converted a garden into something very like a wilderness. The forests we found had fallen; the rich soil of many wide districts was washed into the sea, leaving nothing to represent them; and when the smoke of battle cleared away, we saw a naked land. It could not have been otherwise. Thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the nineteenth century, as well as the principles of the Jeffersonian Democracy, we were entangled in a system of things not compatible, profitably at least, with either. We could not forget that our slaves were human. There were ties that we felt in a hundred ways. We loved this old nurse. We humored that old butler. We indulged, here a real, there a sham invalid, until, in one word, the thing began to cost more than it came to, and it was time we shook off the incubus.

And there was a time when many Virginians, now living, began to see this; and had they been let alone, not many years would have passed before we should have freed ourselves from the weight that oppressed us. But in an evil hour there arose a handful of men with a mission,—a mission to keep other people's consciences,—often—as certain national moral phenomena subsequently showed—to the neglect of that charity which begins at home. From that day all rational discussion of the question became impossible in Virginia; and a consummation for which many of the wisest heads were quietly laboring became odious even to hint at, under dictation from outsiders; and on the day when the first abolition society was formed, the fates registered a decree that slavery should go down; not in peace, but by war; not quietly and gradually extinguished, with the consent of all concerned, but with convulsive violence,—drowned in the blood of a million men, and the tears of more than a million women.

Well, they were only white men and women,—so let that pass, too.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"GIT out o' de way, you niggers! Aint y' all got no manners? Git out o' Marse Billy way! I declar' fo' Gaud niggers ain't got no manners dese days. Tain't like it used to be. Y' all gittin' wuss and wuss."

So saying, Aunt Polly made an unceremonious opening among the eager heads of the youngsters that were thrust into the door-way; and Billy pressed laughing through the throng, nodding here and there as he passed. His arrival was hailed with beaming smiles by the ladies, and an almost uproarious welcome by the gentlemen. The Don had already opened his heart to him before he had gotten within introducing distance, charmed by his frank and manly bearing, his hearty manner with the gentlemen, his gentle deference to each lady in turn. So Billy's sunny face, his cordial rushing hither and thither to greet his friends, his cheery laugh as he exchanged a bright word here and there,—a laugh that revealed a set of powerful and large, though well-shaped teeth,—all this had lighted up the thoughtful face of the Don with a sympathetic glow,—a glow that vanished when, on their being introduced, Billy's fist closed upon his hand.

Mr. Billy was always a great favorite with me. Indeed, I like to think of him as a kind of ideal young Virginian of those days,—so true, and frank, and cordial, and unpretending. But there is one thing—I have mentioned it above—that, as a historian, I am bound to confess: Billy was addicted to playing on the fiddle.

"So, young ladies," said my grandfather (for whose annual tunes no one, somehow, had thought of calling), "you will have a fiddle to dance by, after all." A remark that elicited a joyous clapping of hands; and there was a general stir for partners.

"Dares any man to speak to me of fiddling," said Billy, "before I have punished a few dozen of these bivalves?"

"That's right, Billy! Dick, some oysters for Mr. Jones! They were never better than this season!"

Billy passed into the next room, where Dick and his spouse began to serve him with hospitable zeal.

"How was she, Marse Billy?"

Billy had just disposed of a monster that Dick had opened for him, and was looking thoughtful.

"Uncle Dick, it almost makes me cry to think how much better that oyster was than any we can get at the University; indeed it does."

Dick chuckled with delight. "I believe you, Marse Billy; dey tells me dere ain't no better oysters in all Fidginny dan de Leicester oyster."

Four or five students, who, like Billy, had run down home for the holidays, had collected round the doorway leading into the library, and with them several girls who were listening in a half-suppressed titter to Billy's solemn waggery. Lifting a huge "bivalve" on the prongs of his fork, he contemplatively surveyed it.

"You are right, Uncle Dick; Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these!"

"Jess so! What I tell you, Polly?" said Dick, straightening himself and holding an unopened oyster in one hand and his knife in the other. "Didn't I say the Nuniversity was de most high-larnt school in de Nunited States?"

Polly, being Mrs. Dick, had too great an admiration for that worthy's wisdom to do anything but simper assent.

"Jess so,"—and he held his eye upon her till he felt sure that she had abandoned all thought of protesting against his dictum,—“eben so. You right, Marse Billy; Solomon nor no other man never raised 'em like one o' dese. Ain't you takin' nothin' to-night, Marse William? Dey tells me toddy help a oyster powerful."

"Uncle Dick," exclaimed Billy, with admiring surprise, "how do you manage always to know exactly what a fellow wants?"

"Marse William,"—and Dick drew himself up to his full height,—“I ain't been 'sociatin' wid de quality all dese years for nothin'."

The dancing being over at a reasonable hour,—Billy and the Herr furnishing the music,—the ladies retired to their rooms in the “Great-House,” leaving the gentlemen to their toddy and cigars; and a jovial crew they became. Billy and the Herr bore a large part in the entertainment of the company,—the former executing reel and jig and jig and reel in dashing style,—the latter improvising accompaniments,—his head thrown back, a cigar-stump between his teeth, and contemplating, through his moist spectacles, with a serene Teutonic merriment, the capers of the revellers, one or another of whom could not, from time to time, resist the fascination of the rhythm, but would spring to his feet and execute something in the nature of a Highland fling or a double-shuffle, to the great delight of the others, and of none more than my glorious old grandfather. It is needless to remark that at each one of these Terpsichorean exhibitions there was a suppressed roar of chuckles to be heard issuing from the sable throng that crowded the door-ways, and that there might have been seen as many rows of ivories as there were heads massed together there.

“It is refreshing, Mr. Whacker,” observed the Don, whose reserve was unmistakably thawing under the apple-toddy, “to see a man of your age sympathizing so heartily with us youngsters in our enjoyments.”

“Yes,” remarked the old gentleman, lolling comfortably back in his chair; “but I am not so sure that I have left all the fun to the youngsters;” and he nodded towards his empty glass; “but I believe I enjoy the capers of the boys more than the toddy.”

“Go it, Billy!” cried a student, as that artist dashed into a jig with a zeal heightened by the enthusiasm of the now slightly boozy Herr.

“Bravo!” cried Mr. Whacker; “you will have to look to your laurels, Charley.”

“Oh, I resign!” said Charley, examining the rag on his finger.

“By the way, Charley, you have not yet shown Mr. Smith the old Guarnerius. Do you take any interest in such things?”

"I have a great curiosity to see it."

"I am afraid it will not show off to advantage. I have forgotten to have it mounted with strings this Christmas. Do you know that a violin gets hoarse, as it were, from lying idle?"

"I have heard something of the kind."

"I should have had it strung several days ago."

"I put strings on it day before yesterday," said Charley.

"Indeed!" said my grandfather; "but you were always thoughtful. Let us have it, Charley."

Charley's return with the violin made a stir among the company. Billy stopped his fiddling and came up, followed by all present, to see opened the case that contained the wonderful instrument, which was a sort of lion among the fiddlers of the county. My grandfather unlocked the case with a certain nervous eagerness, raised the lid almost reverently, and removing the padded silken covering which protected it, "Now just look at that," said the old gentleman, his eye kindling.

I have often seen ladies take their female friends to the side of a cradle, and softly turning down the coverlet, look up, as much as to say, "Did you ever see anything half so beautiful?" And I must do the female friends the justice to add that they always signified that they never had; and I have often seen the subject of such unstinted praise, when brought before males, pronounced a pretty enough baby, but a baby seemingly in no wise different from all the babies that are, have been, or shall be; and on such occasions I can recall, methinks, some maiden aunt, for example, who has ended by getting worried at the persistent inability of some obstinate young fellow to see certain points of superiority about mouth, eyes, or nose, which to her were very clear. And so it was on this occasion, as on many previous ones, with my grandfather. He was always amazed, when he showed his violin, at the polite coldness of the praise that it received.

"Look at those *f*-holes," said he, taking the violin out of its case; "look at those clean-cut corners!" And everybody craned his neck and tried to see the clean-

cut corners. "What a contour!" exclaimed the enthusiastic old gentleman, holding the instrument off at arm's length and gazing rapturously upon it. There was a murmur of adhesion, as the French say.

"Splendid!" ejaculated Billy, feeling that something was due from him as the fiddler of the evening; thereby drawing the gleaming eyes of Mr. Whacker full upon him. "Splendid!" repeated he, in a somewhat lower tone, and looking steadfastly at the violin; for he could not look the old gentleman in the face,—knowing—the honest scamp—that he was a fraud, and saw nothing wonderful in the instrument.

"Why, hand me that old gourd you have been playing on," said Mr. Whacker; and he snatched the fiddle from Billy's hand. "Look at those two scrolls, for example," said the old gentleman, bumping them together within three inches of Billy's nose.

Billy took the two necks in his hands, screwed up his face, and tried his best to look knowing; but his broad, genial countenance could not bear the tension long; and a sudden flash of humor from his kindly eyes set the company in a roar, in which my grandfather could not help joining.

"Well, well," said he, "I suppose I ought not to expect you to be a connoisseur in violins. Would you like to examine it?" said Mr. Whacker, thinking he detected a look of interest on the part of the Don,—and he handed him the instrument.

The Unknown took it in an awkward and confused sort of way. My grandfather looked chopfallen. "I thought that possibly you might have seen Cremonas in Europe," observed the old man timidly.

The Don bowed,—whether in assent or dissent was not clear; nor was it any clearer, as he gently rocked it to and fro, examining the *f*-holes and other points of what is known as the belly of the instrument, whether he was moved by curiosity or by courtesy. A motion of his wrist brought the back of the instrument in view. "By Jove!" vehemently exclaimed the stranger, as a flood of golden light flashed into his eyes from the unapproachable varnish; but he colored and looked con-

fused when he saw that his warmth had drawn the eyes of all upon himself. Even Charley ceased examining the bandage on his finger and quietly scrutinized the Don out of the corners of his eyes.

But you should have seen your ancestor and mine, my dear boy. He rose from his seat without saying a single word. There was an expression of defiance in his fine brown eyes, not unmingled with solemnity. He held out his upturned hands as though he were going to begin a speech, I was going to say,—but it was not that. His look and attitude were those of an advocate who has just brought a poser to bear on opposing counsel. And such my grandfather felt was his case. “For years,” his looks seemed to say, “I have been chaffed about my Guarnerius by you bumpkins, and now here comes a man who puts you all down by one word.” He looked from face to face to see if any of the company had anything to say to the contrary. At last his eye met Billy’s. That young gentleman, willing to retrieve his disastrous defeat in the matter of scrolls and contours and *f*-holes, again came to the front.

“Doesn’t it shine!” remarked that unfortunate youth, approvingly.

“Shine!” shouted my grandfather, indignantly,—“shine!” repeated he with rising voice, and rapping the back of the violin with his knuckles,—“do you call that shiny?” said he, with another rap, and holding the instrument in front of Billy. “Why, a tin pan shines,—a well-fed negro boy’s face shines,—and you say *that* shines,” he added, with an argumentative rap. “Is that the way you are taught to discriminate in the use of words at the University?” And the old gentleman smiled, mollified by Billy’s evident confusion and the shouts of laughter that greeted his discomfiture.

“Why, Uncle Tom, if that violin doesn’t shine, what does it do?”

“Why, it—well—I should say—ahem!—in fact, it—I—”

“What would you call it, Uncle Tom?” urged Billy, rallying bravely from his rout, and trying to assume a wicked smile.

"What would I call it? I would call it—well—the violin—confound it! I should hold my tongue rather than say that violin was shiny." And the old gentleman turned upon his heel and stalked across the room; but Billy was not the man to relinquish his advantage.

"Now, Uncle Tom, that is not fair," said he, following up his adversary, and holding on to the lappel of his coat in an affectionately teasing manner. "Give us *your* word."

"Shiny! shiny!" spluttered the old gentleman with testy scorn.

"Ah, but that won't do. Let the company have your word, Uncle Tom." And the young rogue tipped a wink to a knot of students. "The violin is—?"

"EFFULGENT!" shouted his adversary, wheeling upon him and bringing down the violin, held in both hands, with a swoop.

I shall take the liberty here of assuming that my readers are, as I was myself, till Charley enlightened me, ignorant of the fact that the varnish of the violins of the old masters is considered a great point. Collectors go into raptures over the peculiar lustre of their old instruments, which, they say, is the despair of modern makers. I have myself seen, or at least handled, but one of them,—my grandfather's old Guarnerius,—and that, certainly, was singularly beautiful in this respect.

"Effulgent!" cried he, his noble brown eyes dilated, his head tossed back and swaying from side to side,—tapping gently, with the finger-nails of his right hand, the back of the violin, upon which the light of a neighboring lamp danced and flamed. The students indicated to Billy, in their hearty fashion, that he had got what he wanted, and Mr. Whacker, spurred on by their approval, rose to the height of his great argument.

"Just look at that," said he, turning with enthusiasm to one of the students,—*"just look at that,"* he repeated, flashing the golden light into the eyes of another; "why, it almost seems to me that we have here the very rays that, a century ago, this maple wood absorbed in its pores from the sun of Italy."

How much more my grandfather was going to say

I know not; for he was interrupted by a storm of applause from his young auditors.

"I say, boys, that's a regular old-fashioned 'curl,'" whispered one of them.

"Uncle Tom," said Billy, removing the bow from the case, "does *this* effulge any?"

"But, Mr. Whacker," observed a fat and jolly middle-aged gentleman, "it strikes me that the important thing about a fiddle is its tone, not its varnish. Now, do you really think your Cremona superior to a twenty-dollar fiddle in tone? Honestly now, is there any difference worth mentioning?"

"Any difference? Heavens above! Why, listen!" And the old gentleman drew the bow slowly over double strings, till the air of the room seemed to palpitate with the rich harmony. "Did you ever hear anything like that?" exclaimed he, with flushing face; and he drew the bow again and again. There were exclamations of admiration—real or affected—all around the room.

The Don alone was silent.

I remember looking towards him with a natural curiosity to see what he—the only stranger present—appeared to think of the instrument; but he gave no sign,—none, at least, that I could interpret. He was gazing fixedly at my grandfather with a sort of rapt look,—his head bowed, his lips firmly compressed, but twitching a little. His eyes had a certain glitter about them, strongly contrasting with their usual expression of unobtrusive endurance. I looked towards Charley, but his eyes did not meet mine; for he had turned his chair away from the fire, and was scrutinizing the stranger's face with a quiet but searching look.

"It is a little hoarse from long disuse," said Mr. Whacker, drawing the bow slowly as before.

"Give us a tune, Uncle Tom?"

"Yes, yes!" joined in a chorus. "Give us a tune!"

"Pshaw!" said the old gentleman, "it would be a profanation to play a 'tune' on this instrument."

"There is where I don't agree with you, Mr. Whacker," put in the fat and jolly middle-aged gen-

tleman. "The last time I was in Richmond I went to hear Ole Bull; and such stuff as he played I wish never to hear again,—nothing but running up and down the strings, with de'il a bit of tune that I could see."

"That's precisely my opinion," said another. "Confound their science, say I."

"Why, yes," continued the jolly fat middle-aged gentleman, encouraged. "The fact is, it spoils a fiddler to teach him his notes. Music should come from the heart. Why, I don't wish to flatter our friend Billy here, but, so far as I am concerned, I would rather hear him than all the Ole Bulls and Paganinis that ever drew a bow."

"Rather hear Billy? I should think so! Why, any left-handed negro fiddler can beat those scientific fellows all hollow."

My grandfather, during the passage at arms that ensued upon the expression of these sentiments, grew rather warm, and at last appealed to the Don. He, as though loath to criticise the performance of our friend Billy, spoke guardedly. "I should think," said he, "that music would be like anything else,—those who devoted most time to it would be most proficient."

"Of gourse!" broke in the Herr, who had not allowed the discussion to draw him very far from the bowl of toddy. "Now, joost look at unser frient Pilly. Dot yung mon has a real dalent for de feedle,—but vot he blay? Noding als reels unt cheeks unt zuch dinks. Joost sent dot yung mon one time nach European, unt by a goot master. Donnerwetter, I show you somedink! Tausendteufels!" added he, draining his glass, "vot for a feedler dot yung Pilly make!"

I may remark that just in proportion as the Herr mollified his water did he dilute his English. Just in proportion as he approached the bottom of a punch-bowl did the language of Shakespeare and Milton become to him an obscure idiom.

"Won't you try its tone?" said Mr. Whacker, offering the violin and bow to the Don.

"Oh," replied he, deprecatingly.

"It's of no consequence that you can't play," insisted the old gentleman. "Just try the tone. Here, this way," added he, putting the violin under the Don's chin.

It may seem strange that I, a bachelor, should be so fond of illustrating my scenes by means of babies; but as the whole frame-work and cast of this story compels me to marry at some future day, I may be allowed to say that the Don held the violin just as I have seen young fellows hold an infant that had been thrust into their arms by some mischievous young girl. Afraid to refuse to take it lest the mother be hurt, they are in momentary terror lest it fall.

"There! So!" exclaimed the old gentleman, adjusting the instrument.

While every one else smiled at the scene, Charley was, strangely enough, almost convulsed with a noiseless chuckle that brought the tears into his eyes.

"The old boy feels his toddy," thought I.

The Don began to scrape dismally.

"Ah, don't hold the bow so much in the middle!—So!—That's better!—Now pull away! Keep the bow straight!—There, that's right! So!—"

Charley rocked in his seat.

"Now, up! Down! Up! Down! Up! Very good! Down! Up! Bow straight!—"

Charley leaped from his chair and held his sides. Well, even Cato occasionally moistened his clay.

"So! Better still! Excellent! Upon my word, you are an apt scholar!"

Charley dropped into his seat, threw back his head, and shut his eyes.

The Don paused, smiling.

"What a tone!" exclaimed my grandfather. "Oh! cried he with intense earnestness, "if—if I could but hear, once again, an artist play upon that violin!"

The smile passed from the Unknown's face. A strange look came into his eyes, as though his thoughts were far away. His chin relaxed its hold upon the violin and pressed upon his breast. His right arm slowly descended till the tip of the bow almost touched

the floor; and there he stood, his eyes fixed upon the ground. A stillness overspread the company. No one moved a muscle save Charley. He, with an odd smile in his eyes, softly drew from his pocket a small pen-knife and held it in his left hand, with the nail of his right thumb in the notch of the blade.

Slowly, and as if unconsciously to himself, the Don's right arm began to move. The violin rose, somehow, till it found its way under his chin.

Charley opened his knife.

There were signs in the Unknown's countenance of a sharp but momentary struggle, when his right arm suddenly sprang from its pendent position, and the wrist, arched like the neck of an Arab courser, stood, for a second, poised above the bridge.

Charley passed the blade of his knife through the threads that bound the bandage about his finger, and the linen rag fell to the floor; and he rose and folded his arms across his breast.

The bow descended upon the G string. The stranger gave one of those quick up-strokes with the lowest inch of the horse-hair, followed by a down-stroke of the whole length of the bow.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE note sounded was the lower A, produced, if I may be allowed to enrich my style with a borrowed erudition, by stopping the G string with the first finger. Whimsical as the idea may seem to a musician, I have always considered this the noblest tone within the register of the violin; and such an A I had never before heard. I have already mentioned the extraordinary acoustical properties of this room, the very air of which seemed to palpitate, the very walls to tremble beneath the powerful vibrations. The deep, long-drawn tone ceased, and again the wrist stood for a moment arched above the bridge. A breathless stillness reigned

throughout the room, while the Don stood there, with pale face, his dark eyes "in a fine frenzy rolling,"—stood there, one might say, in a trance, forgetful of his audience, forgetful of self, unconscious of all else save the violin clasped between chin and breast. Down came the fingers of the left hand; with them the bow descended, this time upon all four strings; and four notes leaped forth, crisp, clear, and sparkling, brilliant as shooting-stars! Then chord after chord; and, in mad succession, arpeggios, staccatos, pizzicatos, chromatic scales, octaves, fierce, dizzy leaps from nut to bridge, cries of joy, mutterings of rage, moans of despair, all were there,—a very pandemonium of sound!

It was not a composition,—hardly an improvisation, even; for neither was key sustained nor time observed. It resembled, more than anything else I can compare it to, the mad carolling of a mocking-bird as he flaps and sails from the topmost branch of a young tulip poplar to another hard by, pouring forth in scornful profusion his exhaustless and unapproachable tide of song, little recking what comes first and what next, —whether the clear whistle of the partridge, the shrill piping of the woodpecker, or the gentle plaint of the turtle-dove.

And the mad dancing of the bow went on, amid a silence that was absolute. But it was a silence like that of a keg of gunpowder, where a spark suffices to release the imprisoned forces.

The spark came in the shape of an interjection from the deep chest of Uncle Dick.

But how am I to represent that interjection to posterity?

There came a pause.

"Umgh-u-m-g-h!" grunted our venerable butler. And straightway there ensued a scene which—

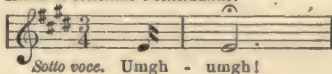
But future ages must first be told precisely what Uncle Dick said; for, as all Virginians, at least, know, when you limit yourself to reporting of a man that he said umgh-umgh, you have given a meagre and inadequate, certainly an ambiguous, interpretation of his sentiments.

Not to go into any refinements, it suffices to say that besides a score of other umgh-umghs of radically distinct significance, there are umgh-umghs which mean yes, and umgh-umghs which mean no. For example, "Dearest, do you love me?" Now the umgh-umgh that may be supposed in this case is a kind of flexible, india-rubber yes, ranging all the way from "Perhaps" to "Oh, most dearly!" (but Charley says that it is umgh-humgh, not umgh-umgh, that means yes;) now follow up your question with a demonstration as though you would test matters,—*umgh-umgh!* What a *no* is there! "Are you crazy? Right out here in the summer-house! with people strolling all around, and the vines so thin that—"

Now, Uncle Dick's umgh-umgh was not at all an umgh-umgh affirmative, still less an umgh-umgh negative. 'Twas rather an umgh-umgh eulogistic, as though he said, Words are inadequate to express my feelings. Now, a less painstaking author than myself would say no more just here; aware that every Virginian, at least, knows what is meant by the umgh-umgh eulogistic; but the contemporary reader must pardon me for reminding him that this book has not been written entirely, or even mainly, for him, but rather for generations yet unborn,—notably the generations of the Whackers. I esteem it, therefore, singularly fortunate that my friend Charley happens to have made an exhaustive study of this same umgh-umgh language, and especially so that he has been at the pains of elucidating his subject by means of a musical notation. Know, then, oh, *propinqui longinqui!*—oh, *manus innumerabiles Whackerorum!*—that the exact sound uttered by that unapproachable Automedon was:

CARLO FROBISHERINI. Opus 99.

Andante sostenuto e scherzando.



"An *andante scherzando*?" exclaimed my grandfather, on seeing the notation; "how is that?"

"'Tis because mine Uncle Richard bath neglected the study of thorough bass; hence he warbleth his native wood-notes wild," quoth Charley.

But to return to the scene in the Hall. And I beg that the reader will place himself entirely in my hands, while I endeavor to make him realize every feature of that scene,—for it really occurred just as he will find it recorded.

Figure to yourselves, then, my countless readers and admirers, first the Hall itself, with its lofty ceiling and its spacious, well-waxed floor of heart-pine so nicely joined that it was a sound-board in itself. At one end of the room stood a piano; at the other was a vast open fireplace, in which, supported by tall and glistening andirons, there glowed a noble fire of hickory logs five feet long. The furniture in the room was peculiar, consisting of a square table of exceeding lightness, and chairs that you might toss in the air with your little finger,—all with a view to the least possible weight upon the floor,—though I must say that they were often the means of bringing heavy weights in contact with it. Add to these a lounge of slenderest proportions, upon which my grandfather loved to recline, pipe in mouth, whenever any music was going forward; and you have all the furniture that the room possessed. Of other objects there were absolutely none upon the floor, except four cases containing the instruments needful to a string quartet; and these stood each in its own corner, as though on ill terms. The old gentleman had banished from the Hall even his collection of music, great piles of which were stowed away in the adjoining room; for he insisted that its weight would mar the resonance of the Hall. It remains but to add that upon the walls no painting or engraving was allowed. Their smooth finish showed no crack,—so that the Herr used to say that the hall, if strung, would have been a very goot feedle for Bolyphemoos, or some oder of dem chiant singers to blay on.

So much for the Hall, around which, on the Christmas Eve in question, were grouped nearly all my grand-

father's slaves old enough to be out on so cold a night, reinforced by many of Charley's.

And I am not so sure that the outsiders were not having a merrier time than the insiders. For every now and then, throughout the evening, my grandfather might have been seen passing glasses of toddy or egg-nog to one or another of the favorite old servants, as he observed them in the throng; and Charley and I saw that the rest had no cause to feel slighted. All had their share,—if not of toddy, at least of that without which all toddy is a delusion and a shadow. Then the sound of Jones's fiddle could not be kept within-doors, and such of them as despaired of forcing their way through the masses around the windows and doors had formed rings, where, by the light of the wintry moon, the champion dancers of the two farms exhibited to admiring throngs what they knew about the double-shuffle and the break-down; and the solid earth resounded beneath the rhythm of their brogans. To me, I remember, they seemed happy, at the time; which goes to show how little I knew about happiness,—and I believe that they too were under the same delusion; but their early educations had been neglected.

Happy or wretched, however, let them form a frame, as it were, for the picture I would conjure up for my reader. The first note drawn forth by the Don had arrested their attention, and there was a rush for every spot from which a view could be had of the performer. See them, therefore, a few of the older ones just inside the door, the less fortunate craning their necks behind, and upon their faces that rapt attention which is an inspiration to an artist. See those others who, huddled upon boxes and barrels piled beneath the windows, are flattening their noses, one might almost say, against the lower panes. At the library door stood one or two tidy house-maids. Uncle Dick, alone, stood near the roaring fire, he assuming that his services were required.

"Hi! what dat?" exclaimed a youngster, when the strange sound first broke upon his ear; for he could not see the Don from where he stood.

"Heish, boy!" broke in a senior, in stern rebuke; "Don't you see 'tis de new gent'mun a-playin' on the fiddle?" And silence reigned again,—a silence broken, from time to time, by a low, rippling chuckle of intense delight, and illumined, one might say, by the whites of an hundred pairs of wondering eyes.

And now let us glance at the dozen gentlemen who sat within, beginning with my dear old grandfather.

At the first long-drawn, sonorous note he had sprung to his feet; and there he stood, with both hands raised and extended as though he commanded silence. And his countenance! never had I seen it look so beautiful! A happy smile lit up his noble face, and he seemed to say as he looked from Charley to me, and from me to Charley, "At last!" And Charley stood leaning against a corner of the mantel-piece, with his arms folded, replying to his friend with sympathetic glances. It was plain to see that he was happy in his old friend's happiness, but there was a droll twinkle in his eyes that even he could not suppress, though he bit his lip. What it meant I could not, of course, divine.

It was a treat to behold the Herr on this occasion. With his forearm resting on the table, his fingers toying with the stem of his goblet, he leaned back in his chair and smiled, through his gold-rimmed spectacles, with a look of profound Germanic content and good nature. Not once did he remove his benignant eyes from the Don, not even when he raised his half-full glass to his lips and drained it to the last drop. Even then he watched, out of the corner of his eye, the fantastic caperings of the bow and the labyrinthine wanderings of the performer's fingers; and slowly replacing his glass upon the table, stroked his long and straggling beard so softly that he seemed to fear that the sparse hairs would mar the music by their rattling.

One word will suffice for the jolly, fat, middle-aged gentleman. He sat with his mouth wide open, tilting back in one of my grandfather's skeleton chairs.

Now, that was not safe.

But there is one face that I shall not attempt to describe,—that of young Jones, the University man, upon

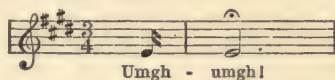
whom it flashed, like a revelation, that he had been, without knowing it, fiddling away for hours in the presence of an artist. It naturally occurred to Billy that a huge joke had been perpetrated at his expense; and after the first few notes, he tried to nerve himself to meet the explosion of laughter that he momentarily expected. But his furtive glances from side to side detected no one looking his way,—no symptom of a joke, in fact,—so that the flush of confusion began to recede, supplanted by a glow of enthusiasm. I leave it to the reader, then, to imagine the play of expression on the countenance of this big, manly fellow,—rejoicing in his strength, and brimful of rollicking humor, loving a joke even at his own expense, as he stood there before the Don; at one time carried away by the impetuosity of the performer, at another flushing up to his eyes when he reflected that, if no one else had served him that turn, he, at least, had made a fool of himself.

This is tableau No. 1, but, for clearness' sake, let me retouch its outlines.

A large room, with a roaring fire at one end, and doors open, Virginia fashion. In the doors and windows a background—or blackground—of colored brethren and sisters, exhibiting a breathless delight, all their teeth, and the largest surface, functionably practicable, of the whites of their eyes. Within, stands my grandfather, on tiptoe, with outstretched arms, which wave gently up and down, as, from time to time, snatches of rhythm drop out of the chaos of chords and runs that are pouring from his Guarnerius. Next the jolly fat middle-aged gentleman, tilting back, open-mouthed, in one of Mr. Whacker's phantom chairs, and rather near the fire. Then Mr. William Jones himself, who just at this moment has compressed his lips, and resolved that he will smash his fiddle and break his bow just so soon as he reaches No. 28, East Lawn, U. V. Then there is the Herr Waldteufel, smiling through clouded glasses, but not darkly. Then—to omit half a dozen gentlemen—there was the inscrutable Charley, leaning, with a certain subdued twinkle in his eyes, against one end of the mantel-piece, while near the other stood, in re-

spectful attitude, Uncle Dick, his hands clasped in front of his portly person, his bald head bent low, his left ear towards the music, his eyes fixed askance upon the fire to his right.

Midst this scene of perfect stillness stood the Don,—his body swaying to and fro. The old Guarnerius seemed to be waking from its long slumber, and, as if conscious that once more a master held it, to be warming to its work. The music grew madder. At last there came some fierce chords, then a furious fortissimo chromatic scale of two or three octaves, with a sudden and fantastic finish of fairy-like harmonies,—the snarling of a tiger, one might say, echoed by the slender pipings of a phantom cicada:



CHAPTER XXXI.

IT was a match to the mine, that umgh-umgh eulogistic, and the explosion was tremendous; for my grandfather's toddy-bowl, though wide and deep, was now nearly empty. In an instant every man was on his feet, cheering at the top of his voice. Such hats as were available, seized without regard to ownership, were frantically whirling in the air; tumblers went round in dizzy circles; centrifugal toddy was splashing in every direction; while the rear ranks of the colored cohorts were scrambling over the backs of those in front, to catch a glimpse of the scene. In the midst of it all, the honest Herr was to be seen rushing to and fro, lustily shouting out some proposition as to the health of the stranger. He was brandishing his goblet, which he had managed to fill, notwithstanding the confusion, and offering to chink glasses with any and all comers, when, as ill luck would have it, he ran into one

of the students as enthusiastic as himself, and the twain suddenly found themselves holding in their hands nothing but the stems of their goblets.

"Ah, mein freund," said he, with a glance at his soaked shirt-front, "vot for a poonch vas dat!"

"Very good, very good!" cried the student, with a rousing slap on his shoulder; for a vague feeling came over the young man that one of the Herr's puns was lurking somewhere in the mist.

But the most striking figure in tableau No. 2 was that of my grandfather. As soon as Uncle Dick's applauding grunt had broken the spell that held the company, and while all were cheering lustily, he rushed up to the Don, and placed his hands in an impressive way on his shoulders. The cheering suddenly ceased, and all listened intently save the Herr and his student, who, having found fresh tumblers, were busy scooping up the last of the punch.

"My friend," said my grandfather, "Charley and I are but two in this big house,"—and there was a simple pathos in his manner and tones.—"Won't you live with us—for good?"

Tremendous applause greeted this rather thorough-going invitation; and tableau No. 2 dissolved in confusion; in the midst of which stood the Don, bowing and laughing, and wisely holding high above his head the precious violin.

"Ah, dere spoke de Barrone!" quoth the Herr, balancing himself, and clinking half-filled glasses with his student.

"Good for Uncle Tom!" echoed the latter.

"Sol!" chimed in the Herr, blinking at the ceiling through the bottom of his tumbler.

"I am in downright earnest, I assure you," urged Mr. Whacker, on remarking the pleased merriment of the Don. "Eh, Charley?"

"So say we all of us!" said Charley, with jovial earnestness, and shaking, with great cordiality, the stranger's right hand, whence I had removed the bow.

Uncle Dick now came to the fore again. Uncle Richard was a humorist, and, with all the tact of his

race, knew perfectly well, how, while preserving a severe decorum of form, to make his little bit. So now, turning to Aunt Polly, with a look on his face of childlike simplicity, beneath which lurked a studied unconsciousness, he asked, in the most artless stage-whisper,—

“Polly, whar’s Marse William Jones?” And rising on his toes and letting his under jaw drop, as one will when peering over the heads of a crowd in search of a friend’s face, he ran his eyes, with a kind of unobtrusive curiosity, over group after group, till they met Marse William’s; then instantly dropped them as if he simply desired to be assured that his Marse William was there. ’Twas perfect art, and the effect electric. In an instant all eyes were fixed on Billy. Uproarious laughter burst forth from the company, in the midst of which the students made a rush for the unhappy fiddler. He had hardly one second’s time given him to decide what to do; but before his friends reached him he had bowed himself, and, with one leap, sprung far under the table, where he lay flat upon the floor, with his face buried in his hands, convulsed with almost hysterical laughter.

“Haul him out! haul him out!” rose on all sides, and—

But just here I must permit myself a philosophical reflection, the truth of which will be readily acknowledged by all publicans and sinners, and such other disreputable persons as, in company with those like-minded with themselves, have looked upon the wine when it was red. It is this: That fun is literally intoxicating. At a wine-party of young men, for example, all things will go on smoothly for hours. Conversation is going forward pleasantly, or speeches heard with decorum. A pleasant exhilaration is to be observed, but nothing more. Then there will arise, by chance, some one, who, we will say, shall sing a capital new comic song, calling on the company to join in the chorus. At the close of that song you shall wonder what has happened to everybody. Why does your right-hand neighbor throw his arm across your shoulder and call you old boy? What sudden and inexplicable thirst is this that

has seized upon the man on your left, that he should be calling for champagne so lustily? What is that little fellow, at the other end of the table, doing there, standing up in his chair, and waving his glass? What strange glow is this that has flashed through *your* frame, bearing along with it the conviction that you are all glorious fellows and having a glorious time?

"Haul him out! haul him out!" And instantly the students dived, pell-mell, under the table. It would be simply impossible to describe the scene that followed. Under the table there was an inextricably entangled mass of vigorous young fellows, some on their heads, others on their backs, with their heels in the air, tugging away with might and main at each other's arms and legs; for safety, as to the Greeks at Salamis, had arisen for Jones from the very numbers of his foes. Meantime the table danced and bumped over the floor, rocking and tossing above this human earthquake; while around it there arose such peals of uproarious laughter as one could not expect to hear twice in a life-time.

"Mein Gott!" gasped the Herr, falling up against the piano, and wiping his streaming eyes, "mein Gott, how many funs!"

But the scene did not last half so long as I have been in painting it. It was the middle-aged fat gentleman that, in the twinkling of an eye, put an end to all this tumultuous laughter, or, at any rate, drew its brunt upon himself.

The M. A. F. G., as above stated, was tilting back in one of my grandfather's slender chairs, in front of the fire, balancing himself on tiptoe, and rocking to and fro with uncontrollable laughter. In front of him a student was backing out from under the table, all doubled up, his head not yet free from its edge, and tugging away manfully at the leg of a comrade. Suddenly the foot he held resigned its boot to his keeping. The M. A. F. G. could hardly tell, afterwards, what it was that, like a battering-ram of old, smote him at the junction of vest and trousers; but it would seem to have been that student's head. Up flew his heels,

crash went the chair, and, quicker than thought, he was sprawling upon his back in the midst of that roaring hickory fire. A dozen hands seized and dragged him forth. Jones and his fiddle were forgotten; and he and his young friends emerged from under the table to join in the shouts of laughter that greeted the M. A. F. G., as he capered briskly about, brushing the coals and ashes from his broad back, and belabored by his friends, who were assisting him in saving his coat.

"Tausendteufels! vot for a shbree!" And the Herr sank exhausted upon the piano-stool.*

CHAPTER XXXII.

"CHRISTMAS gift! young ladies, Christmas gift!" chirped Aunt Phœbe, bustling briskly, in her resplendent bandanna, into the room, and courtesying and bowing, and bowing and courtesying in turn, to the two fair heads that lay deep-nestled in their pillows.

"Christmas gift!" modestly echoed the handmaiden Milly, her sable daughter, modestly bringing up the rear and showing all her ivories.

I don't think the relations between Virginia master and Virginia slave ever appeared in a gentler or more attractive aspect than on Christmas mornings. The way the older and more privileged domestics had of bursting into your room at the most unearthly hour, shouting "Christmas gift! Christmas gift!" beaming with smiles and brimful of good nature, was enough to warm the heart of a Timon.

"Well, Aunt Phœbe," said one of the drowsy beauties, "you have caught us."

"Gracious, is it daybreak yet?" yawned hazel-eyed Alice. "I am s-o-o-o sleepy!" And turning over in

* It will doubtless surprise the reader to be informed that this whole scene actually occurred, substantially as I have described it,—even the last seemingly extravagant detail having been witnessed, not invented, by the author.

bed with a toss, she closed her eyes and pouted as though she had much to endure.

"Daybreak? *Daybreak?* Why, Lor', chile, ain't Polly done put on her bread to bake? Git up, git up, you lazy things! Don't you know all de beaux is up and dressed, and a-settin' round, 'most a-dyin' for to see you?"

"Poor things, are they?" mumbled Alice against her pillow.

"To-be-sho, to-be-sho dey is," reiterated Aunt Phœbe; though, as a veracious historian, I must let the reader know that it was a pious fraud on the old lady's part, inspired by solicitude for the reputation of the Elmington breakfast; for not one of the sinners had stirred.

"I believe," added Aunt Phœbe, observing that Mary's eyes were open,—*"I believe,"* said she, going up to Alice and looking down upon her with an admiring smile, *"dat dis is de sleepyheadedest one of 'em all."*

Alice gave a little grunt, if the expression be parliamentary.

"Makin' 'ten' she 'sleep now," said Aunt Phœbe, casting knowing nods and winks at Mary.

"When she is awake, Aunt Phœbe, she is wide enough awake for you, isn't she?"

"Lor' bless you, honey, I b'lieve you; she cert'n'y do beat all." And the floor trembled beneath the good old soul's adipose chuckle. "She is a pretty chile, too, she is mum," continued the old lady, assuming, with her arms akimbo, a critical attitude. Mary rose on her elbow to observe Alice's countenance. Her lips began to twitch, slightly, under this double gaze.

"And I ain't de onliest one as thinks so, neither," added she, tossing back her head with a look of triumphant sagacity.

"Who is it? who is it?" And Mary rose and sat up in bed.

"Nebber mind, nebber mind!" replied she, with diplomatic reserve. "Nebber mind; Phœbe ain't been livin' in this world so long for nothin'. De ole nigger got eyes in her head, and she can see out'n 'em, too; you b'lieve she can, my honeys."

"Oh, do tell me, that's a good Aunt Phœbe!"

"Though she ain't got no specs on her nose." And the good soul threw herself back and gave vent to a very audible h'yah, b'yah, h'yah.

"Is—it—Uncle—Tom?" droned out Alice, in an almost inarticulate murmur.

"Now jess listen at dat chile! Ole marster! She know better! She know who 'tis I'se 'spressin' 'bout f' all she a-layin' d'yar squinched up in dat bed, making out she'sleep. D'yar now, what I tell you!" exclaimed she, as Alice sprang suddenly up in bed, her eyes sparkling, her color high, her dishevelled hair in a golden foam about her temples.

"'Sleep, was she! h'yah, h'yah, h'yah! Well, to-be-sho, talk 'bout de young gent'men cert'n'y were de wakinest-up talk for a young lady dat eber dis ole nigger did see. To-be-sho! To-be-sho! Lord a' mussy!" added she, rocking to and fro and clapping on her knees with both hands, as Alice, with a light bound, sprang into the middle of the floor. "Ef I didn't fotch her clean out o' bed!" And the hilarious old domestic wiped the tears from her eyes with a corner of her check apron. "Well, now, and what is she up to?" added she, as Alice ran nimbly across the room and opened a closet.

"Aunt Phœbe," said Alice, advancing with all the solemnity of a presentation orator, "permit me to offer you, as a slight testimonial of my unbounded esteem, this trivial memento. Within this package is a dress, selected especially for you with the greatest care, at the most fashionable store in Richmond. Wear it, and rest assured that the dress will not become you more than you will become the dress." And after executing, with her tiny little feet, a variety of droll capers, all the while maintaining a look of preternatural solemnity, she placed the package in the arms of the amazed Phœbe, with a tragic extension of her right arm, immediately thereafter dropping one of the most elaborately grotesque courtesies ever seen off the comic stage.

"Lord a' mussy, what kind o' funny lingo is—"

Squeak! squeak! Bang! bang! And two girls.

but partially dressed, tumbled tumultuously into the room, shrieking and slamming the door after them.

The chemists tell us that if you separate two gases by a membrane, they will insist upon mingling; and, not knowing why this takes place, they have christened the process endosmose and exosmose. Sociology furnishes a noteworthy parallelism in the endosmose and exosmose of girls dressing for breakfast in a country house. You may stow as many as you will into as many rooms as you choose, but every one of them will find her way into every other room before her toilet is complete; and, by the end of a week, the raiment of each will be impartially distributed throughout the several chambers allotted to their sex. Their movements on these occasions are peculiar. "Where is that other stocking of mine? Oh, I know!" And she approaches the door of her room, opens it a couple of inches, and warily reconnoitres with eye and ear. Seizing an opportune moment when the coast is clear, she darts like a meteor across the hall, and into a neighboring room—

"I say, girls, have any of you seen a stray stocking?" etc., etc.

And so, upon the present occasion, a pair of beauties unadorned came bounding into the room, breaking in upon Alice's impromptu tableau. This, however, they had not time to remark; but wheeling round, as soon as they were safe within the door, they opened it an inch or two, stuck their several noses into the opening, and uttered to some person in the hall a few words of saucy triumph. Mr. Whacker had, in fact, stepped into the hall just as they were crossing it; and, seeing them, had given chase. Having made a few mocking faces at the old gentleman, and shut the door with another slam and another pair of pretty shrieks when he made as though he would follow them, they turned to their friends.

"Did you hear it, girls?" began one of the intruders.

"Hear what?"

"The music."

"The music? What music?"

"What! did you, too, sleep through it all?"

"What! was there a serenade, and you did not wake us? It was really mean of you!"

If *ouch* is masculine, *really mean* is feminine.

"Bless you, we heard never a note of it ourselves!"

"A note of what? Who heard it, and what was there to hear? What enigma is this?"

"Why, hasn't Aunt Phœbe told you?"

"Told us what? What is there to tell, Aunt Phœbe, and why have you not told us already?"

"Bless your sweet souls un you, I ain't had time," said old Phœbe, bowing and courtesying all round; while Milly grinned ungainly in her wake.

"You see, I jess stepped in on dese two young ladies fust, and cotched 'em Christmas gift, and very nice presents they had, all ready and awaitin' for ole Phœbe,"—and she courtesied to each,—“and for Milly, too, bless their sweet souls un 'em, jess like dey knowed Phœbe was a-comin' to cotch 'em,—bless de pretty little honeys!—and so says I, says I to myself, says I, I'll jess step in and catch dese two fust; and so, I creeps up to de door, I did, soft as a cat, I did, and turns de knob, easy-like, and I flings open de door and 'Christmas gift' says I, jess so, says I, and dey had de most loveliest presents all wrapped up and a-waiting for Phœbe, jess as I tell you, and for Milly too, and I dunno what Milly gwine do wid all de things she done got, and dey is all nice and one ain't no prettier dan de others, and Phœbe is uncommon obleeged to one and all,”—and she gave a duck in front of each,—“and Milly too. Gal, what you a-standin' dere for, wid your fingers in your mouth, like somebody ain't got no sense? Ain't you gwine to make no motion? Is dat de way I done fotch you up, and you b'long to de quality, too? Dese young niggers is too much—too much for Phœbe!”

It would be going too far, perhaps, to say that Milly blushed; but she managed to look abashed, and contrived to appease her mother by sundry uncouth wriggings, meant to express her thanks.

"Howsomedever, as I was sayin', year in and year out ole marster have had a heap o' young ladies

a-spendin' Christmas at Elmin'ton,—fust one Christmas and den another; but ef ever Phœbe saw more lovelier—”

“Oh, Aunt Phœbe!”

“Fo' de Lord, I hope de crabs may eat me ef tain't so, jess as I tell you. Why, Lor' bless my soul, ain't I hear all the young gent'men say de same?” [general satisfaction.] “On course I has! I wish I may drop dead if I don't b'lieve ole marster must a' picked Richmond over pretty close.”

The merriment elicited by this remark gave such pause to the old lady's eloquence that Alice was enabled to put in a word.

“But, Aunt Phœbe, tell me about the serenade?”

Phœbe looked puzzled.

“Tell us about the gentlemen's serenade last night?”

“Lor', chile, ole marster don't have none o' dem high-fangled Richmond doin's 'bout him; thar warn't nothin' but apple-toddy and eggnog.”

“But the music, Aunt Phœbe?” persisted Alice, repressing a smile.

“De music!” ejaculated Phœbe; “de music! Didn't you hear it through de window? You didn't?” And she clasped her hands, shut her eyes, and began rocking to and fro, her head nodding all the while with certain peculiar little jerks, “Umgh-umgh!—umgh-umgh!—umgh-umgh!” This inexplicable dumb-show she kept up some time. “Don't talk, chillun; don't talk—umgh-umgh!—don't talk,—I axed Dick dis mornin', says I, Dick, says I, huckum, you reckon, nobody never told ole marster as how Mr. Smith drawed sich a bow, says I?”

“Mr. Smith!” exclaimed Alice, looking at the two girls with amazement in her wide eyes.

The two girls nodded.

“Yes, Mr. Smith was de very one. Phœbe never did hear de like, never in her born days. Sich a scrapin' and a scratchin', and sich a runnin' up and down a fiddle, Phœbe never did see, though she thought she *had* seen fiddlers in her time.”

And she went on and gave such an account of the

performance as you would not find in any musical journal. What did she know, poor soul, about technique, for example,—or breadth of phrasing, for the matter of that?

"*Mr. Smith!*" reiterated Alice, with stark incredulity.

"Dat was de very one!"

Alice looked from one to another of the girls.

"Did you ever!" looked they in turn.

"I thought I should a' died a-laughin' at young Marse Billy Jones. When I seed him and all dem young gent'men a-scuflin' and a-bumpin' under dat table, oh, Lord, says I, how long! But when Marse Raleigh, he upshot into de fire, thinks I to myself, my legs surely is gwine for to gin way under me!—but Marse Charley, he cert'n'y do beat all. I reckon all you young mistisses was a-thinkin' he had done gone and cut he finger when he let de knife fall and went for a rag? I be bound you did; but Lor' me, nobody don't never know what Marse Charley is up to. Dey tell me as how he knowed all along 'bout Mr. Smith playin' on de fiddle; but he never let on even to ole marster; and I heard 'em all a-questionin' him 'bout it; but Marse Charley, he jess laugh and laugh, sort o' easy-like, and never tell 'em nothin'."

"Mr. Frobisher knew what a great musician Mr. Smith was?" asked Alice, her incredulity beginning to give way.

"Jess so, Miss Alice, jess so. Why, Dick says he really do b'lieve into he soul dat Mr. Smith b'longs to a show or somethin' or other; and what Dick don't know 'bout dem kind o' mysteries ain't worth knowin'. Why, didn't Dick drive de carriage down to Yorktown when dey give de dinner to Ginrul Laughyet, and hear de brass band play and all? Great musicianer? I b'lieve you! Umgh-umgh! To-be-sho! To-be-sho!"

"Well!" said Alice, dropping down into a chair with a bump. "Well!" repeated she, with emphasis.

"Why, what is the matter?"

"Never mind!" said she, tossing her head as she pulled on a stocking. "I'll make him pay for it!" she

added, jerking on the other with a rather superfluous vigor; and then, discontinuing her toilet, she dropped her two hands upon her knees and gazed at vacancy for a moment.

"What is it? What is it?" cried the girls, as they saw, gradually diffusing itself over her flushed countenance, an intensely quizzical smile. For her only answer Alice threw herself into an exceedingly comic attitude of exaggerated stiffness, and began playing upon an imaginary piano, tum-tumming, in the most ludicrous way, a commonplace air much in vogue at the time.

"Oh, what geese we have made of ourselves!" cried the girls.

"Yes," continued Alice, "here have we, all this time, been playing our little jiggetty-jigs before him, and he affecting not to know Yankee Doodle from Hail Columbia!" And she tossed off a few more bars with inimitable drollery. "Oh, it is too funny!" cried she, springing up, her sense of humor overriding her sense of chagrin; and from that time till the party were ready to descend to the breakfast-room, she was in one of her regular gales, causing the upper regions of the house to resound with incessant peals of laughter.

"Why, you dear, crazy little goose," said one of the girls at last, "the breakfast-bell rang fifteen minutes ago, and all the rest of us are dressed, and there you are still in a most unpresentable costume."

"There, then, I'll be good," said Alice, cutting short some caper; and instantly assuming the busiest air, she trotted briskly about the room, laying hands first on one article of dress and then on another, contriving, somehow, to combine with a maximum of ostentatious activity a minimum of actual progress in her toilet.

"Here, girls," said Mary, "I'll hold her while the rest of you dress her."

So saying, she seized her, and in a moment the submissive victim was surrounded by as lovely a band of lady's maids as one could wish to see. First one brought her—but, somehow, there seems to arise like

an exhalation, just here, a mysterious haze, impenetrable to my bachelor eyes.

"There now, girls, you need not wait for me. I shall be down in a moment. Go down. No, I won't have you wait for me! Aunt Phœbe will never forgive you if you let the muffins get cold. Moreover, I wish to add to my toilet, in private, a few killing touches, of which I alone possess the secret. Maidens, retire!" And with outstretched, dimpled arm, she pointed to the door. Thus dismissed, they soon found their way to the breakfast-table; and, as was to be expected, there immediately arose a very animated talk upon the events of the preceding evening.

A Virginia breakfast, in those days, was not wont to be a lugubrious affair; but I think that this was, perhaps, the brightest that I remember. The events of the previous evening were told and retold for the benefit of the ladies. Young Jones was invited to describe the emotions which caused him to dive under the table, the middle-aged fat gentleman got what sympathy was his due, when, just as each girl had, for the twentieth time, exclaimed that it was "really mean," Alice stood upon the threshold.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

No one had heard her approaching footsteps. The charming little actress stood there, her arms akimbo, her head tossed back, her eyes fixed upon the Don with the blackest look she could command. To the salutations of the company, to my grandfather's request that she be seated, she deigned no reply; and suddenly whisking herself to the side of the table, she poured in upon the Don a still more deadly fusillade of fierce glances at short range; then, as the only unoccupied seat was next his, she advanced to take it, but in the twinkling of an eye her whole manner had changed, though *why* it changed I cannot explain, nor she any

more than I, doubtless. I record facts, merely. As she went mincing around the table to reach her seat, she suddenly became converted into a prim and absurdly affected old maid. Her manner of shaking out her napkin would have been alone sufficient to convulse the company. In fact, for a time, all breakfasting, considered as a practical business, came to an end. The very streams of hot muffins, waffles, and buckwheat cakes stood still, in presence of this joyous spirit, as of old the river forgot to flow when Orpheus touched his lyre. I can see her now, it seems to me, nibbling at the merest crumb upon a prong of her fork, sipping her coffee with dainty affectation, ogling the gentlemen with inimitable drollery.

"Ah, Mr. Smith," said she, suddenly turning to the Don and dropping the rôle she had assumed for one of the most artless simplicity,—*"I am so delighted to hear that you are a musician. Do you know, I had an idea that you knew little of music, and cared less; so that—do you know?—we girls actually feared that our playing bored you? Indeed we did!"* she added, with emphasis, and looking up into his face with an ingenuous smile. *"Didn't we, girls? But it is such a nice surprise to find you were only pretending to be an ignoramus. Why, it was only yesterday morning that I was explaining to you the difference between the major and the minor keys!—and you knew all the time!"* And she gave a delicious, childish little laugh. *"It is such a comfort to know that you have been appreciating our music all this time. Oh, Mr. Smith!"* exclaimed she, infantile glee dancing in her hazel eyes, *"I have one piece that I have never played for you. I'll play it immediately after breakfast. It is called—let me see—"* And with eyes upturned and fingers wandering up and down the table, she seemed to search for the title of the composition. *"Oh!"* cried she, gushingly, and throwing herself forward in front of the Don, and turning her head so as to pour her joyous smile straight into his eyes,—*"oh, it is called the Jenny Lind Polka;"* and she beamed upon our artist as though awaiting an answering thrill. *"What! You never*

heard it? No?" (strumming on the table.) "Tump-ee! Jenny tump-ee! Lind polka? Tump-ee, tump-ee, tump-ee, teedle-ee—possible?" (with a look of intense surprise). "Tump-ee, teedle-ee, tump-ee, teedle-ee—No? W-h-y, g-i-r-l-s! Second part: Teedum, teedle-um, tee-dum, teedle-um—you don't—teedum teedle-um—recognize it? Tee-dum, teedle-um tum, tum, tum—You are quite sure? Tump-ee, tump-ee—Quite? You shall have it immediately after breakfast—tump-ee, tump-ee." And apparently unable to restrain her impatience, she recommenced the strain, and rattled it off with an ever-increasing brio, till, at last, as though transported with enthusiasm, she pushed back her chair and launched forth into a *pas seul*, tripping round the table, her dress spread out with thumb and forefinger of either hand, the graceful swaying of her lithe figure contrasting comically with the tin-pan tone she contrived to give her voice, and the ludicrous precision of her steps; but, changeful as the surface of a summer lake, she had hardly made the circuit of the table once, when she laid her dimpled cheek upon her rosy fingers, her rosy fingers interlaced upon the shoulder of an imaginary partner, and stilling her own voice, and as though drunk with the music of a mighty orchestra, she floated about the room, with closed eyes, in a kind of swoon.

Just at this juncture, there chanced to be standing near the outer dining-room door our friend Zip. Zip—but, as these were Christmas times, let us call him Moses—stood there, with hanging jaw, and rolling his rather popped eyes, first towards his chief, and then in the direction of the table, in manifest perplexity as to the disposition to be made of a plate of waffles he had just brought from the kitchen. Confused by the meriment, he failed to observe the fair Alice bearing down upon him. Away went the waffles over the floor. "That's the way it goes!" said Alice to the Don, without even a glance at the waffles; "and you have never heard it before?" asked she, resuming her seat by his side. In fact, the most amusing feature of her entire performance was how utterly unconscious she seemed

that any one heard or saw her save the new-found artist. Every word, every look, every gesture seemed designed solely for his edification. I shall not permit myself to describe the deportment of the company while Alice was on her high horse; for Lord Chesterfield has pronounced laughter, save in children, vulgar. And so, I shall declare breakfast over, and allow our merry friends to betake themselves whither fancy impels.

"What kind of a day is it?" inquires one; and the whole party soon find themselves scattered in groups on the southern veranda.

It was one of those enchantingly beautiful winter mornings, never witnessed, perhaps, out of America. The ground was frozen hard; while every tuft of dry grass, every twig in view, bedecked with hoar-frost, danced and flashed and sparkled beneath the dazzling yet hazy sunlight, with the mingled glow of opals and of diamonds. And what an atmosphere! Still, but not stagnant; for behold the dreamy undulations of that slender column of smoke, so peacefully rocking above yonder whitewashed cabin! Cold, not chill; descending into the lungs as a stimulating and refreshing bath; clear, but not colorless; tinted, rather,—nay, transfigured, with the translucent exhalations of nameless gems,—such was the air that floated over lawn and river on that bright Christmas morning.

It was a day too fine to be lost; and a vote being taken, it was decided that a walk should come first. And forth the joyous procession sallied, Alice and young Jones—kindred spirits—taking the lead. Let them go their way, rejoicing in their youth; and, while awaiting their return, I shall, with the consent of the contemporaneous reader, say a word or two about Virginia society, as it was, to that reader of the future for whose edification these slight sketches are drawn; to wit, my great-great-great-etc. grandson.

In my Alice, then, I have endeavored to place before you and future generations a type taken bodily from the joyous, careless life of ante-bellum days. Many of my contemporaries will recognize her and her merry-

glancing hazel eyes. My friends—all Richmond, all Virginia, in fact—will know the original of the picture,—each one his own original. But the truth is, in painting the portrait of our jolly little Alice I have aimed at more than representing the features of a charming girl. I have striven to place before you a marked phase of Virginia society,—its freedom. It was this which gave it a charm all its own, and it would be interesting, did it not lead me too far from the path of my narrative, to point out the contrasts it affords to English society. Both eminently aristocratic, it is singular that the former should have been so unshackled, so unconventional, so free, while its prototype is, without doubt, the most uncomfortable, the most stifling tyranny that men and women—and men and women, too, of one of the grandest races of all time—ever voluntarily submitted to. And, strangely enough, Virginia is almost the only one of the United States where anything like a fair type of the mother society has survived. The English gentleman, like the Virginian, has his home in the country; but this is true, in this country it may almost be said, of Virginia gentlemen alone; if, at least, the terms be not understood in a sense too literally geographical. The Southern planter was wont to betake himself to New Orleans in winter, with half his cotton crop in his pocket, reserving the other half for Saratoga and the North when summer came. Charleston was the Mecca of the South Carolinian; while the wealthy citizen of New York, if he had his villa on the Hudson, retired to it rather to avoid than to seek society, or else, still unsated with the joys of city life (the detestation of your true John Bull), even when driven out of town by the dust of summer and the glare of wall and of pavement, he hastens to Newport, there to swelter through the dog-days in all the pomp of full dress and fashionable fooleries. Some stray lord has mentioned in his hearing—or some one who has seen a stray lord—that summer is the London season (none other being possible in that climate), and straightway he trims his whiskers *à la* mutton-chop and buys a book of the peerage; nor suspects that the more

closely you imitate an Englishman the less you resemble him,—one of the strongest characteristics of that great race being their disdainful refusal to imitate any other.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THREE o'clock was, in those days, the dinner-hour of the Virginia gentry; but my grandfather and Charley, being but two in family, and not caring to be bothered with three meals a day, had gotten into the habit of dining at five; and so, shortly before that hour, on this Christmas day, all the company, having made their toilets, had assembled in the drawing-room. But, as far back as I can remember, I don't think that Aunt Polly had ever let us have our Christmas dinner before six. Aunt Polly could never explain this fact to our satisfaction. "Ready," she once made reply to my boyish impatience, "no, dat tain't. How you gwine 'spect de fire to cook all dese things quick like a few things? Jess look at dat pot! I set it d'yar to bile and d'yar it sets a-simperin' and a-simperin' like people never did want to eat nothin'."

"In course," broke in old Dick, with stately profundity, "a rolling stone never gathers no moss."

"Git out o' my way, Dick, and lemme lift de led off dat d'yar skillet. Moss! Moss! Who talkin' 'bout moss, I'd like to know? And all de white folks a-waitin' for dinner!" And she mopped her face with her sleeve.

"I meant to rubserve," rejoined Dick, with offended dignity, "dat a watched pot never biles."

On the present occasion Mrs. Carter gave the company an intimation that they had an hour on their hands.

"Why not adjourn to the hall," suggested Mr. Whacker, "and while away the time with some music?"

The company rose with enthusiasm. "Oh, how nice!" And all the girls clapped their hands.

"Mr. Frobisher," said Jones, dryly, "if your finger be sufficiently healed, suppose you lead off. As for me—I—have a sore throat."

"Ah, that poor finger!" cried Alice, "how remiss in us girls not to have inquired after its health! How is the dear little thing?"

"I beg your pardon?" inquired Charley, with an innocent look; but his hands had somehow found their way behind his back.

"How is your cut finger?"

"My cut finger?"

"Yes, y-o-u-r c-u-t f-i-n-g-e-r!"

"M-y c-u-t f-i-n-g-e-r?" And he mimicked her imperious little gestures; at the same time looking from face to face with a sort of dazed air.

"Isn't this a sort of conundrum?"

"No; show me your hand."

"There," said he, holding out his right hand,—“there is my hand,—you may h-h-h-h-ave it if you want it.” And immediately, as though he had said more than he had intended, blushed to the roots of his hair.

"Nonsense!" said she, coloring slightly. "Why do you tantalize people so? The other!"

"The other? There they are, both of them."

"But which is the finger that you cut?"

"Who said I c-c-c-ut my finger?"

"Do you mean to say—" began Jones; but shouts of laughter interrupted his question, and, turning to a group of students, he pursed up his mouth and emitted a long but inaudible whistle. Charley, meanwhile, was assailed with questions by the girls as to what made him suspect that the Don was a musician; but he passed, smiling and silent, towards the western door, and he stood there bowing the ladies out on their way to the Hall.

"Fiend in human shape!" breathed Alice, as she passed out, threatening him with upraised forefinger.

"Do you really think so?" asked he, in a hurried, half-choking whisper,—the idiot!

The enchantress stopped, and slowly turning her head, as she stood with one foot upon the pavement and the other on the step above, turning her head, all gilded and glorious with the mellow rays of the setting sun, gave him one Parthian glance, half saucy, half serious, and bounded forward to overtake her companions. Charley, with his eyes riveted upon her retiring figure, stood motionless till she had disappeared within the Hall. Did he hope—the simpleton—for another look?

The Don and I were lingering on the Hall steps when Charley came up.

“By the way, how on earth did you divine that I played on the violin? You have no objection to telling me?”

“None in the world. There was no divination about the matter. When you were knocked senseless by the runaway horses, I helped to undress you. On removing your coat a paper fell out of the breast-pocket, and I remarked, on picking it up, that it was a sheet of manuscript music.”

“Oh yes, I remember,—a little waltz that I had composed that day.”

“I didn’t know who had compo-po-po-sed it,” replied Charley, dryly, “but I have m-m-m-ade it a rule all m-m-my life never to play before people who went about the country, getting run over, with m-m-m-anu-script m-m-m-u-sic in their pockets.”

“And you would seem,” added the Don, smiling, “never to have mentioned your suspicions?”

“Not to me, certainly,” said I.

“Not to you, nor to Uncle Tom; not even to Jones.”

“Not even to Jones!” repeated the Don, laughing heartily. “Thanks,” added he, suddenly seizing Charley’s hand,—“thanks.” And he sprang lightly into the room.

“Charley, you are a rare one. The idea of your not letting the old man or myself into the secret.”

“W-e-l-l, y-e-s,” said he, abstractedly. He seemed in no hurry to enter the room, holding me back by a firm though unconscious grasp upon my arm. “I say, Jack,” said he, in a confidential tone. And he stopped.

"Well?"

"Isn't she a stunner?" And he nodded towards a group of girls who stood about the piano.

"Which one?"

He dug me in the ribs and passed into the Hall

CHAPTER XXXV.

WITH the assembling of our friends in the Hall on that Christmas afternoon our story enters upon a new phase,—one, too, in which Mary Rolfe will figure more prominently than she has hitherto done. Of her friend Alice—Alice with the merry-glancing hazel eyes—the reader has, I trust, a tolerably clear conception. The picture we have of her is a pleasant one, I think,—a picture drawn not by me, but by herself. But from Mary—shy, reserved, and shrinking as she is—we can expect no such boon. Her portrait must be my work.

And first, I must repeat that she was Alice's closest friend. When their acquaintance began, it would be hard to say. Their mothers before them were warm friends, and had been so fortunate as to have their homes, after marriage, separated only by one of Richmond's peaceful streets; so that, even in long clothes, Alice and Mary, introduced by their respective nurses, had contracted such intimacy as might be gained by a reciprocal fumbling of each other's noses and the poking of pink fingers into blinking eyes. Across this street, a few years later, these little crafts had made voyages innumerable; beneath its branching trees trundled their unsteady hoops, and along its not very crowded sidewalk had swung proudly, hand in hand, one bright October day, going to their first school. And ever since that day they have been going, so to speak, hand in hand. One circumstance, no doubt, that contributed much to binding their hearts together, was the fact that they were only daughters; so that each was, as it were the adopted sister of the other. But what,

above all things, as I have suggested elsewhere, rendered a warm friendship between them both possible and lasting, was the singularly sharp contrasts presented by their characters. Two girls more radically unlike in disposition it would be hardly possible to find.

Now, among other traits of Mary's character, totally lacking in Alice, was one of importance for my purposes, in that it was destined to make her play a considerable rôle amid the scenes to be pictured in the ensuing pages. It was a trait that goes by different names. According to some of her acquaintance,—kindred spirits they were,—Mary was full of enthusiasms, while to others of the hard-headed, practical type, she seemed sentimental. I, as umpire, must compromise by admitting that she was certainly what is called romantic. And I was about to bring in a little cheap philosophy to explain that this was due to the vast amount of novels and poetry with which she had stuffed her head, when I recalled the fact that some of the most clear-headed, energetic, and every way admirable women that I have known devoured every novel that they could lay their hands on. I, therefore, abandon the reflection, uncopyrighted, to such moralizers and others as have leisure to explain things of which they know nothing. But the fact was as I have stated it; Mary was a thoroughly romantic, or, if you will, sentimental young person, though I regret to have to say so. For it will lower her in your estimation, I fear, when I make known to you, by a few illustrations, what I mean by saying she was romantic.

It is more necessary for me to do this than would appear to the average contemporary reader. For it is more than likely that the expression, a romantic young female, will be totally unintelligible in your day, or, rather, that it will have an entirely different meaning from that which those words convey to us. You, too, of course, will not be without your romantic virgins,—that is to say, maidens of tender years, who, standing upon the hither brink of that dark and troublous sea called life, and watching the pitching and tossing of the numberless barks that have gone before,—who, see-

ing some struggling amid the breakers, others going to pieces on the reefs, still others drifting, dismantled and shattered, upon a shore already thick-strewn with wrecks,—yet love to dream of smooth and sunny paths across that pitiless waste of waters,—if—if only the Ideal Pilot may be found.

Yes, your girls will have their ideals,—but what ideals?

I cannot tell; but very different, doubtless, from ours. We have but to glance at here a page and there a page of the past records of the race, to feel quite sure that woman's ideal man has varied much in the tide of time. Passing by prehistoric man, lest I wound the susceptibilities of such as claim that he never existed, and coming forward to the days of Homer, we must suppose that the sentimental daughters of the literary gentlemen of that day—the chiefs, to wit, who patronized the blind bard—for rhapsody divine bartering the prosaic but sustaining bacon—we must reckon it as probable that these young women yearned—if yearning were in vogue at that early period—yearned to be led from the parental roof by some Achilles of a youth, tall, broad-chested, agile as a panther, strong as a lion, with thews of steel, soul of adamant, eye of consuming fire. Juvenal, again, if we may pluck a leaf at random, tells us that, in his day, a sentimental married woman who would shriek at a mouse, let us say, was capable of braving the sea in a leaky old hulk, eloping with all that was left of a gladiator after twenty years' hacking in the arena. And now, making a spring forward into the last quarter of the nineteenth century, we find the ideal of the upper ten dozen of New York society, for example, to be a nice young man who parts his hair and his name in the middle, leads in the "german"* and gets all his "things"† in London. [And this sufficed till but recently. Of late, however, as I read in the papers, the best society of New York has grown more exacting, and no one need now aspire to be looked upon as a lion—a knight without fear and without reproach—

* Dance of the period.

† Clothes.

unless, after devoting for some years half his time and all his mind, as it were, to the art, he can "handle the reins" well enough to pass for a real stage-driver. The 'bus-drivers themselves, however, whimsically enough, are not held in half the estimation of their imitators and rivals (just as mock-turtle soup is deemed by many superior to the genuine decoction). They may actually be hired at two dollars a day, more or less, and seem positively glad to get that, being to all outward seeming entirely unconscious of the glamour attaching to their ennobling art.]*

But to judge by the books they devoured with such eagerness, and the heroes they thought so captivating, the ideals, thirty years ago, of the Virginia young women—I may not speak for others—were very different from any of those above depicted. At that period the influence of Byron's powerful genius was still plainly discernible in many works of fiction, especially those by female authors. Now, just as certain cordials lose all their piquancy by being diluted, so the morbid creations of Byron's unhealthy muse emerged, after passing through the alembic of female fancy, very pale heroes indeed; pale, in truth, in a double sense. For, at one time, I remember, a bloodless countenance was about all that was required to constitute a hero over whom all our girls went mad. The fellow was invariably dimly cold and impassive "in outward seeming;" but the authoress would contrive to suggest to the reader, by a hint here and there, that this coldness was in outward seeming only,—that this stern, haughty possessor of the broad, pallid brow (against which he ever and anon pressed his hand as though in pain) was the clandestine owner of feelings fit to be compared only to a stream of lava,—a cold crust above, concealing a fiery flood beneath; an iceberg, in a word, with a volcano in its bosom. There are no such icebergs, I believe, and it is equally certain that there are no such men; and I used to think, in those days, that if there were

* If our fierce Bushwhacker could but witness the annual parade of our New York Coaching Club, he would be heartily ashamed of this venomous passage.—*Ed.*

such, and one of this type were found hanging around a girl, the circumstance would afford her big brother's boot legitimate occasion for an honorable activity. And I still think that this heroic treatment, as the faculty would term it, would find its justification, at least from a sanitary point of view. For it is to be remarked that in romances infested with this form of hero, there was, among the heroines, a veritable epidemic of brain-fever; whatever that may be. But the young ladies of my acquaintance, assigning jealousy as the source of these ferocious sentiments, could not be brought to my way of thinking; and of all of a certain bevy of girls with whom I associated, I believe that Mary Rolfe was furthest gone in her adoration of these august animals that dwelt apart.

Now, although a romantic temperament has its compensations,—compensations so varied and so valuable that, on the whole, it must be regarded as a blessing,—yet its dangers are as obvious. For of what avail is an Ideal without its Counterpart? Now, it is in searching for and finding this Counterpart that lies the danger to a girl of imaginative turn,—the danger, in plain English, of falling in love without a just and reasonable regard for the loaves and fishes of this prosaic world.

Now, even from the preliminary and partial sketch of the Don already made, you will see (though less clearly than when the drawings shall have been completed and the colors rubbed in) that he was a man likely to make a vivid impression on the imagination of a girl like Mary. I should be sorry, indeed, to have you suppose that such likelihood arose from any resemblance on his part to the type of novel-hero so fascinating to her imagination. And yet he appealed to that imagination most strongly. Of course the mystery surrounding him had much to do with this. Of late she had found herself continually asking herself who he could be. Was he a Virginian? Hardly, else some one would know him. Then, why had he come to Virginia? Was he an English nobleman, travelling incognito? Perhaps! But no! from several observations that he had let drop, he could scarcely be that. He was a gentle-

man, certainly ; but then, what need has a gentleman of mystery ? Had he committed any—? Impossible ! And so, *da capo*,—who can he be ? More than once she had caught herself stamping her little foot and muttering impatiently, “What is he to me ?” But his image kept returning to her mind. The truth is, she was getting what the girls used to call, in those days, “interested,”—a word which means far more with women than with us men. “In love” is what we should call it ; but that is an expression which women are chary of using, unless of men. According to their philosophy, it is tacitly assumed that, as it is not the proper thing for a woman to fall in love until she has been asked to, she never does ; and I believe this to be true, as a rule. In fact, it seems to me that falling in love, as it is called, is, with women, a purely voluntary act. When entreated to lose their hearts they lose them, should it seem judicious, all things considered, so to do ; if not, not. But as in Latin grammar, so in life : there are exceptions to all rules ; and while, in nine cases out of ten, women are guided by judgment and reason, men impelled by passion and instinct, in their matrimonial ventures, yet there is, after all, a tenth case (all my readers are tenth cases if they will) where a woman, deluded by her imagination, wrecks her life on breakers that seemed, to others at least, too apparent to need a beacon. Nor are the weaker sisters most liable to blunders of this kind ; for it seems to me that I have remarked that gifted women are most apt to throw themselves away on men entirely unworthy of them ; led captive by the ideals their own hearts have fashioned ; making gods of stocks and stones.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

NEVER, perhaps, was there a merrier Christmas party than that which was now laughing and chattering as they seated themselves before that noble hickory fire which lit up the Hall with its ruddy glow. The

pleasantest thing of all was to see the happy change that had come over the Don. He was a different man. That air of self-restraint and conscious reserve, which had never left him before, had entirely vanished. It was evident that, whatever his motives for concealing his musical talents, it was an immense relief to him to have abandoned the singular rôle he had been playing; and his long-imprisoned feelings had bounded up like a released spring. We hardly knew him. He was not only unconstrained and cheerful, he was even jolly. "I say, old boy," said he, slapping Jones on the shoulder, "you must not suppose that it was I who laid that trap for you yesterday evening. My playing was purely unintentional,—even involuntary. But who could have resisted Uncle Tom?" This was the first time he had ever called my grandfather by that name.

"No apologies, no apologies," replied Billy. "Mr. Charles Frobisher set that snare for my unwary feet."

"Not at all," rejoined Charley. "I kept my wary feet out of it, that was all."

"But wasn't it capital!" cried Jones; and showing all his massive white teeth, he made the hall resound with a laugh that echoed contagiously from group to group.

But there was one person in the room who did not share in the general joyousness,—our friend Mary. She had taken her stand apart, by a window that commanded the western horizon; and turning with a half-startled air, at the sound of the laughter, responded to it with a faint and preoccupied smile. In truth, the poor child was ill at ease; though what it was that troubled that young heart none of my readers, I feel assured, would ever guess. Yet, while to most of them the cause of her annoyance will appear whimsical in the extreme, as it was characteristic of her to suffer from such a cause, I must state it, and towards this end a few prefatory words will be necessary.

Neither the Virginians nor the American people, nor any branch of the great race from which they spring, are lovers of music. Our boys, it is true, will troop up and down the streets of village or city, following the

band-wagon of a circus. We manufacture an enormous number of the very best pianos in the world, and thousands of our girls labor for years learning to play a few tunes on them: Mothers without number pinch themselves that their daughters may have the desired instruction. It is the correct thing. Yet, her graduating concert over, her piano soon ceases to constitute any more considerable element of a girl's happiness, or that of her family, than her copy of Euclid.

Yet, although English of the purest breed, there are Virginians who really love music; just as you shall find Spaniards with red hair, bashful Irishmen, women with beards, hens that crow, bullies with courage, mules without guile, and short sermons and true happiness. I do not allude to our charming girls who flock to the occasional opera that visits Richmond,—for in Richmond, as elsewhere, there are dozens of reasons for flocking to the opera.

No; I had in my mind the far-famed Virginia fiddler—mock him not, ye profane—who, though frowned upon by the moralist, viewed askance from the pulpit, without honor as without profit in his own country, still scrapes away as merrily as he can under the load of obloquy that weighs him down. But his devotion, if heroic, wins him no glory; for the people of Virginia, forgetting, with the usual ingratitude of republics, Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry, regard the worthlessness of the whole fiddling tribe as axiomatic. Nay, worse, there is a vague feeling that the thing is vulgar.

Now, in that word lies the key to Mary Rolfe's distress of mind. Born and bred in the midst of that singularly pure, and simple, and refined society of Richmond in the ante-bellum days, inheriting from her father a love of all that was most beautiful in English prose and verse, as well as led by his hand to the nooks where were to be culled its choicest flowers; her manners formed and her instincts moulded by her mother upon the classic types of Virginia patrician life of the olden time, she was more than a representative of her class. The refined delicacy of her nature amounted,

if not to a fault, at least to a misfortune. In the society of those like herself she was easy, affable, winning; but the slightest deviation from high breeding chilled her into silence and unconquerable reserve. The most trivial social solecism shocked, vulgarity stunned her.

And fiddling!

According to her high-wrought soul the thing was unworthy of a gentleman. Nor is this so much to be wondered at, for, although distinguished violinists had visited Richmond, it so happened that she had never heard one. Her knowledge of violin music was confined to fiddling pure and simple,—the compositions, jigs and reels; the performers, as a rule, negroes.

If, then, I have in any measure succeeded in depicting Mary as she really was,—an exquisitely refined, oversensitive girl just out of school, her head full of poetry and romance, her heart beginning to flutter with a sweet pain in presence of an Ideal Hero, so suddenly, so strangely encountered,—my reader (being a woman) will appreciate the shock she felt on that Christmas morning. It will be remembered that it was Aunt Phoebe who had been the first to describe the Don's performance to the young ladies.

"Play de fiddle? Can *he* play de fiddle? I b'lieve you, honey! Why, Lor' bless me, I do p'int'ly b'lieve into my soul dat Mr. Smith is de top fiddler of de Nunited States!"

A fiddler! And a top fiddler! Shades of Byron and of Bulwer! Mary felt an icy numbness at her heart.

Half an hour afterwards, when the two girls were nearly ready for breakfast, she was standing behind Alice, pinning on her collar.

"Oh, Alice," cried the little hypocrite, suddenly, as though the thought had but just occurred to her, "what charming music we shall have now!"

"Oo-ee," cried Alice, shrinking.

"Ah, did I prick your neck?"

"Yes; but no matter. Oh, yes, I am just dying to hear him play,—and play he shall, or my name is not Alice Carter: There you go again! Bear in mind, please, that the collar is to be pinned to my dress, not

to my lovely person. What *could* have induced him to hide such an accomplishment!" added she, stamping her little foot.

"There! That sets very nicely! I don't know what made me so awkward. So you think it is—wait a moment,—ah, that's just right,—an accomplishment?"

One man in a thousand may acquire somewhat of the art, but every woman is born a perfect actress. True, you shall not see this perfection on the stage. There the ambition of women is to be actresses, rather than actresses women.

It was perfect! But Alice was not thrown off the scent.

Men can deceive men; men may hoodwink women, and be hoodwinked in turn; but it has not been given to one woman to throw dust into the eyes of another. The silliest girl can see through the most astute as though she were of glass.

"An accomplishment? What? To pin people's collars to their necks?"

"Of course not, goosey! An accomplishment for gentlemen to play on the fid—violin?"

"Oh!" said Alice, dryly. "Why, of course it is. Any art which gives pleasure is an accomplishment."

"Yes, I know; but—"

"Go on."

"I don't think it is—exactly—oh, I don't know what I think about it."

"But I do," replied Alice, quickly, turning and facing her friend.

"And what do you know that I think, that I do not know myself?" said Mary, putting her hands on Alice's shoulders, drawing her close, and smiling affectionately into her eyes.

"Don't you remember my laughing, once, at school, over the story about Alcibiades' refusing to learn to play on the flute, because he deemed the necessary puckering of the mouth undignified, and that you thought he was right? Heroes, my dear, according to your romantic notions, must always be heroic."

"Heroes!" exclaimed Mary, with wide-eyed innocence. "Who, pray, mentioned heroes!" But a heightened color tinged her cheeks.

Alice, without making reply, placed her hand over Mary's heart, and stood as though counting its beats. "'Tis a dear little heart," mused she, "but—"

"But what?"

"But very susceptible, I fear." And lifting her right hand, she shook her forefinger at her friend. "Take care!" said she, with a voice and look half serious, half jocular.

"Oh, don't be uneasy about me!" And with a bright smile on her flushed face Mary frisked away to join some of the other girls who were descending to the breakfast-room.

Falling in love is like getting drunk,—we blush when we betray symptoms of the malady, yet rejoice in its progress!*

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WE now return to our friends assembled in the Hall.

Especially among the ladies who had not heard the Don's first performance, expectation was on tiptoe. The excellent Herr is bustling about, rubbing his hands, and smiling through his spectacles the vast Teutonic smile. Charley places the case containing the Guarnerius upon the table. The Don opens it with an almost nervous eagerness. *She* is to hear him, and he will outdo himself.

But where is she? Presently he espies her partly concealed behind the stalwart form of Jones. She is gazing at the western sky,—she alone of all the company unconscious that he is about to play.

The thought is a sudden shock. And then he remembers that she alone of the ladies had made no allusion, during the day, to the performance of the evening before,—had expressed no regret at not having been present.

* And for such sentiments I was to stand sponsor! John Bouche Whacker, thou corrupter of youth, avaunt!—*Ed.*

The artist nature is caprice itself,—changeable as an April sky; and the Don with sudden impulse released the neck of the violin, which sank back upon its luxurious cushion of blue satin. He would excuse himself,—he *could* not play. But the strings, vibrating beneath an accidental touch, gave forth a chord, and instantly reversed the current of his feelings. Yes, he would play; and taking up the instrument, he sauntered over, with as careless an air as he could command, to the window by which Mary stood, touching the strings lightly as he went, as though to see whether they were in tune. Mary felt his approach; and partly turning her face and raising her eyes to his, as he reached her side, she said, with what was meant for a smile, “Now we shall have some merry music.” And she dropped her eyes.

“Why merry?”

Mary, startled as well by the abruptness of the question as by a certain hardness in his voice, gave a quick glance at his face.

“Why, is not the violin—” began she, but could get no farther,—held, as was the Wedding Guest by the glittering eye of the Ancient Mariner.

“Is this, then, a merry world?”

The smile faded from Mary’s face. These words had thrilled her; for it was not by nature a blithesome heart that beat in that young bosom, and its strings gave forth readiest response to minor chords. A slight tremor ran through her frame as she met the gaze of his darkly gleaming eyes, and a vague sense of having in some way wounded his feelings oppressed her mind.

Perhaps he read her thoughts; for in an instant a reassuring smile—sad, almost pathetic—came into his eyes, followed by a look,—one momentary, indescribable glance; and her untutored heart began to throb so that she thought he must hear it.

“I, at least,” he added, slowly, “have not found it such, so far; and see,” said he, pointing with his bow to the faint streaks of red that tinged the western horizon,—“still another Christmas Day—and the only happy one that I have known since I was a child—one more

Christmas Day—is dying!” And his voice trembled as he averted his face.

Mary felt a choking sensation in her throat; for a kindred thought had been weighing upon her naturally melancholy spirit, as she stood there gazing upon the western sky; and the Don, in giving voice to her inmost thoughts, had touched a chord that thrilled with overmastering power. As he moved away to take his place by the piano, she sank into a chair trembling from head to foot. They had stood together by the window hardly one minute, and had not exchanged above a dozen words; yet as she followed his retiring form with her eyes, he was no longer the same person to her that he had been a moment before. She was stricken to the heart, and she knew it.

The Don spoke to Charley in a low voice. “Yes,” replied he, “we have it;” and hurrying into the adjoining room he soon returned, bearing in his hand some sheet music. “Thanks,” said the Don, placing the piano-part before the Herr, and laying the violin score upon the piano. “Never mind about the stand; I know it by heart. Can you read yours, Mein Herr, by the light of the fire?”

“Oh, I tink so.” And adjusting his spectacles, he looked at the title of the piece. “*De Elegie von Ernst!* Ah, das ist vat you call very sat, very vat you call melancholish,”—and he struck a chord. “So!”—and poising his hands, he glanced upwards to signify his readiness to begin.

A sudden stillness came over us at the sight of the sombre face of the Don. Obviously, we all felt there was to be a change of programme. There were to be no musical fireworks on this occasion.

Had the Don been a consummate actor, posing for effect, he could not have brought his audience into more instant, more complete harmony with the spirit of the piece he was about to render. Tall, broad-shouldered, gaunt, he seemed in the ruddy glare of the great bank of coals to tower above us, while his eyes, fixed for a moment with a far-away look upon the fire, seemed doubly dark in contrast with the red light upon his brow.

He placed the violin beneath his dark, flowing beard, and poised the bow above the strings.

I fear that but few of my readers will follow me in this scene. To have heard pathetic music only in theatres and concert-halls, amid a sea of careless faces distracted by bright toilets, and under the glare of gas-light, is to have heard it, indeed, but not to have felt it. The "Miserere" chanted in the dim religious light of St. Peter's rends the heart of the listener. It has been found to be meaningless elsewhere. For the power of music, as of eloquence, lies in the heart of the hearer,—a heart prepared beforehand by the surroundings.

On the present occasion everything was in the artist's favor,—the dying day, the spectral glare and shadow wrought by the glowing coals, the reaction after a week of frolic gladness.

The bow descended upon the G string, softly as a snow-flake, but clinging as a mother's arm.

Ernst has obeyed Horace's maxim, and plunged at once into the middle of his story. With the very first tone of the violin there seems to break from the overwrought heart a low moan, which, rising and swelling, leaps, in the second note, into a cry of rebellious anguish,—anguish too bitter to be borne; despair were more endurable; and in the fourth bar the voice of the crushed spirit sinks into a weird, muttered whisper of resignation unresigned. The whole story is there,—there in those four bars, but the poet begins anew and sings his sorrow in detail; pouring forth a lament so passionate in its frenzy that it almost passes, at times, the bounds of true music (for can you not hear the sobs, see the wringing of the hands?), and rising, at last, to a climax that is almost insupportable, the voice of wailing then sinks—for all is over—into a low plaint, and dies into silence.

The *Marcia Funebre* of the *Eroica* symphony is the lament of a nation of Titans; in Ernst's *Elegie* one poor human heart is breaking—breaking all alone. I have heard the piece since in crowded halls and beneath the blaze of chandeliers, and performed by artists more

finished, no doubt, than was the Don; but the effect he wrought I have never seen approached. All eyes were riveted upon him while he played, and when he ceased—when the last despairing sigh died upon the air—no one moved, not a note of applause was given, and the only sound heard was that of long-drawn breaths of relief.

It was an intense moment. My grandfather was the first to break the spell. Approaching the Don with a tender look in his eyes, he tried, I think, to speak a few words, but could only press his hand. Then there arose a subdued murmur of whispered enthusiasm, each one to his neighbor. At last—

"Billy," said the middle-aged-fat-gentleman, "I give it up,—he can beat you." And a ripple of laughter relieved the tension.

And Mary?

She and the Don happened to be among the last to leave the hall, and he offered her his arm. Neither spoke for a few moments.

"How silly you must have thought me!"

"I assure you—"

"Oh, but you must. But I had never heard anything but fiddling before. Do you know," she added gravely, "I doubt if any of the company understood all that you meant, save myself?"

"And are you quite sure that *you* understood all that I felt?"

Mary looked up and their eyes met. Releasing his arm as she passed into the house, she colored deeply.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Is not this Thursday?" suddenly asked my grandfather, at breakfast, a week or so after the events just described. "It is? Then this is the day for the Poythress's return. Ah, now we shall have music."

A man talking with another may look him in the

face for an hour without knowing one of his thoughts; a woman will flash a careless glance across your face, —across it—no more,—and read you to the heart.

Alice and Mary beamed upon each other and ejaculated, "Lucy!" But Mary's eyes had had time to sweep the features of the Don. "Won't it be charming to have Lucy with us!" said she; but she hardly knew what she said. Her face, turned towards Alice, wore a mechanical smile; but she saw only the Don and the startled, almost dazed look that came over his face on hearing Mr. Whacker's words. How brave a little woman can be! She turned to the Don and said,—a seraphic smile upon her face,—“You have never heard Lucy play. You have a great treat in store.”

“No,” replied he, dropping his napkin. “No,” repeated he, his eye fixed upon vacancy. He had heard with his ears and answered with his lips. That was all. Suddenly recollecting himself, he turned to her with a bow and a courteous smile: “Yes, it will be a great treat,—very great;” but his thoughts, mightier than his will, swept the smile from his features and left them pale and rigid as before.

How many thoughts crowded upon Mary's heart in that instant! “What a silly school-girl I have been! A word here and a word there, during these last ten days, have made me forget the intense interest he obviously took in Lucy at first sight. After all, what has he said to me? Nothing, absolutely nothing! And yet I was so weak as to imagine—and now he has learned of a new bond of sympathy—music—between Lucy and himself. Why did I learn nothing but waltzes and variations and such trash? If only—too late! And he has seen so little of her! That dream, too,—that strange, terrible dream,—should have warned me. And now Lucy is coming. Lucy! is she, then, so superior to me? She is as good as an angel, I know; but I thought that I—wretched vanity again”—and she stamped her foot—“yet Alice has thought so too—else why—surely, he cannot have been trifling with me? Never! Of that, at least, he is incapable! Such a noble

countenance as his could not—" And for a second she lifted her eyes to his—

"Yes, Zip, I'll take one."

"Girls," said Alice, "just look at Mary; an untasted waffle on her plate and taking another!"

Mary gave one of those ringing laughs that so infest the pages of female novelists.

"Is there to be a famine?" asked one.

"Or is the child falling in love?" chimed in Alice; but without raising her eyes from her empty coffee-cup, in the bottom of which she was writing and re-writing her initials with the spoon.

To all the rest of the company these words seemed as light and careless as the wind. Not so to Mary. Her heart leaped; but, by some subtle process known only to women, she forbade the blood to mount into her cheek.

"I warn you to beware," said Mr. Whacker. "Full many a heart has been lost in this house!"

"All hearts, I must believe," rejoined Mary, with a bow and half-coquettish smile.

My grandfather placed his hand upon his heart and bent low over the table, amid the approving plaudits of the company. Charley did the same. "There are two of us," he explained; "Uncle T-T-Tom and myself."

"He is laughing now; how he seems to admire Mr. Frobisher! But why did he turn pale, just now, at the mention of Lucy's name? I have never read anywhere of love's producing that effect, certainly. Perhaps—perhaps, after all, he did not change color. My imagination, doubtless. No, I am not mistaken! Why, his brow is actually beaded with perspiration! incomprehensible enigma! would to heaven I had never met him! and yet—"

If any of my young readers shall be so indiscreet as to fall in love with enigmas, let them not lay the folly to my charge. I most solemnly warn them against it.

Poor little Mary watched the Don all that day with that scrutiny so piercing, and yet so unobtrusive, of which a woman's eye alone is capable,—hopefully fear-

ing to discover the truth of what she fearfully hoped was not true; but it was not before the sun had sunk low in the west, and she had begun to convince herself of the illusory character of her observations at the breakfast-table, that she got such reward as that of the woman who, after twenty years' searching, at last found a burglar under her bed.

As the time approached at which the Poythress family should arrive (at their home across the river), my grandfather would go out upon the piazza every few minutes, and after looking across the broad river return and report that there were no signs of the carriage.

"It is not yet time by half an hour," said Charley, looking at his watch.

"At any rate I'll get the telescope and have it ready," replied he, as he passed into the dining-room; returning, bearing in his hand one of those long marine glasses so much used at that time. "This is a remarkably fine glass," said he to the Don.

The Don was seated behind Alice's chair, helping her to play her hand at whist, if that name be applicable to a rattling combination of cards, conversation, and bursts of laughter.

"Last summer," continued Mr. Whacker, "I counted with it a hen and seven small chickens on the Poythress's lawn—"

"Mr. Frobisher!" cried Alice. "There you are trumping my ace!"

"Charley!" exclaimed Mr. Whacker, with reproachful surprise.

"And, Uncle Tom, would you believe it,—he has made three revokes already? What ought to be done to such a partner?"

Jones, who ought to have been back at the University long since, was, on the contrary, seated at a neighboring card-table. He remembered the scrape that Charley had gotten him into on Christmas Eve.

"I don't think," said he, soliloquizing, as he slowly dealt out the cards, "that I could love a partner who revoked."

A smile ran around the tables. Charley bit his lip.

"What, Charley!" exclaimed Mr. Whacker. "The ace of trumps second in hand, and you had another!"

"I wanted to take that particular trick," said Charley, doggedly.

Charley and Jones were sitting back to back, their chairs almost touching. Jones turned around, and, with his lips within an inch of the back of Charley's head, spoke in measured tones, "He—is—after—a—particular—trick, Uncle Tom; hence his peculiar play."

Every one laughed, even Charley. Alice's cheeks rivalled the tints of the conch-shell; and Mary, charmed to see her for once on the defensive, clapped her hands till half her cards were on the floor.

I should not have said that everybody laughed, for my grandfather did not even smile. No suspicion of the state of things to which Jones had maliciously alluded had ever crossed his mind. He was totally absorbed in contemplation of the enormity of playing out one's ace of trumps second in hand. And that Charley—Charley, whom he had trained from a boy to the rigor of the game according to Hoyle—that *he* should seem to defend such—so—so horrible a solecism! It was too much. He was a picture to look at, as he stood erect, the nostrils of his patrician nose dilated with a noble indignation, his snowy hair contrasting with his dark and glowing eyes, that swept from group to group of mirthful faces, and back again, sternly wondering at their untimely merriment.

"But, Uncle Tom," put in Jones—

"No, no!" interrupted Mr. Whacker, with an impatient wave of his hand. "Nothing can justify such play."

"But, Uncle Tom, suppose—"

"Very well," replied Mr. Whacker, in a gentler tone, mollified by the anticipation of easy and certain victory, "very well; make your supposition." And he assumed a judicial brow.

"Now, suppose that there is a particular hand—"

Billy paused.

"Well, go on."

"A *very* particular hand."

My grandfather's eyes began to flash. The vast host of those who believe in playing "according to their hands" rose before his mind.

"Go on," added he, controlling himself with an effort.

"Suppose there is a certain hand that a fellow—a hand that a certain fellow—for example—wants—wants—to get possession of."

Charley winced, and Alice's color rose in spite of her utmost efforts to look unconcerned.

"A hand that he wants to get possession of!" cried Mr. Whacker, with unspeakable amazement. "What gibberish is this? I was supposing all along that he *had* the hand!"

"No; but he wants it aw-ful-ly," said Jones, with sepulchral solemnity.

Peal after peal of laughter arose, while Charley shuffled his cards with the vigor of desperation. Poor fellow, he had never been in love before, and—keen humorist that he was—he knew full well that no man could be in love without being at the same time ridiculous. My grandfather looked on, mystified but smiling. "This is one of your jokes," said he, taking Billy by both ears.

"On the contrary, it is a case—ouch!—of the very dearest earnest that I have ever—smiling-ly beheld. But, honestly, Uncle Tom, suppose there was a suit—a suit, mind you—"

"C-c-c-cut the cards," yelled Charley.

"A suit," continued the implacable Billy, "that you were prosecuting—"

"Wished to establish, you mean."

"Yes, a suit—"

"Uncle Tom," cried Charley, almost upsetting the table, "I give it up. 'Twas an idiotic play I made."

Billy threw back his head so that it rested on Charley's shoulder. "When," asked he, under cover of the general laughter,—“when are you going to cut your finger again?"

Just then Mr. Whacker appeared at the window and

gave three brisk raps, and the girls went scampering out on the piazza, followed by the gentlemen, the Don bringing up the rear. There was a general waving of handkerchiefs, and the telescope passed from hand to hand.

"There they all are," cried Alice, cheerily, peering through the glass with one eye and smiling brightly with the other: "Lucy and Mrs. Poythress on the back seat, her young brother and Mr. Poythress in front. They see us now,—there go the handkerchiefs! Ah, just look at little Laura, sitting in Lucy's lap and waving for dear life! Here, Mary, take a look. How distinctly you see them!"

"Yes," said Mary; but with the eye which seemed to be gazing through the telescope she saw nothing, while with the other she took in every motion of the Don. He was striding with irregular steps up and down the piazza, now mechanically waving his handkerchief, now thrusting it back into his pocket; at one time, as he stopped, his eyes fixed upon the floor; at another rolling with a kind of glare as he started suddenly forward. He strode past her, and his arm grazed her shoulder. She shivered. Had her companions observed it? She gave a quick glance, and was reassured. They were all waving in frantic, girlish glee, in response to the vigorous demonstrations across the River. The rainbow knew not of the neighboring thunder-cloud.

"What a terrible love," she mused. "But, oh, to have inspired it!" He had not yet had the glass in his hand; she would offer it to him. Woman alone is capable of such self-sacrifice. She turned towards him as he was passing again, and, though a glance at his dark face almost unnerved her, she stood in his path and offered him the glass. A surprise was in store for her. Brought to himself, he looked startled at first, as though suddenly realizing who stood before him; and then, sudden as a flash of light, there came into his eyes a look so gentle and tender as to set her heart violently beating. Such a look, she felt, would have been a declaration of love in any other man,—but in an enigma?

"Take a look through the telescope," said she, in a voice scarcely audible.

He raised the glass to his eye.

"Lucy is on this side," said she, "with Laura in her lap."

Her eyes were riveted upon his face now. What a change had come over it!

"Her mother sits next her; can't you make out her white hair?"

The strong man's lips quivered.

"She is dressed in black; can't you see?"

His grasp tightened on the glass.

"She dresses always in black."

The telescope began to tremble.

Just then Charley brushed quickly past her and stood beside the Don.

"That's not the way to use one of these long Toms," interposed he, with quiet decision. "They need a rest. Here, take this pillar."

With a bow of acknowledgment the Don obeyed.

Mary's eyes followed Charley with a searching look, as he carelessly sauntered off to the other end of the piazza, muttering half a dozen notes of a popular song; but his serene face gave no sign.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

FRIDAY came, and the Poythresses, having missed the Leicester Christmas festivities, were to dine with us that day. In the evening there was to be (no wonder my grandfather was out on the porch a dozen times, looking for the first oar-splash on the other side)—in the evening there was to be a quintet; and Mr. Whacker, who was as proud of Lucy as though she were his own daughter, was eager to exhibit her prowess to the stranger. It must not be supposed, from my silence on this point, that we had had no music since Mr. Whacker's discovery what a treasure he had in the

Don. During this period we had had quartets, duets, solos innumerable. Christmas times, in fact, as understood at Elmington, had irresistible charms for Herr Waldteufel; and he had hardly left us for an hour.

And now the company at Elmington stood on the piazza watching the boat that, with measured stroke, approached the foot of the lawn.

"How charming to sail forth in a boat to dine!" said Aliee.

"And then the moonlight row home," added Mary; "it suggests Venice."

As the boat neared the landing, there was a general movement from the piazza to meet the coming guests, my grandfather leading the way. He had not made many steps before he looked about him, and seeing the Don bringing up the rear, he slackened his pace. The Don came up biting his nails vigorously, with his eyes fixed upon the ground, but from time to time glancing nervously in the direction of the boat.

"We have invited the whole family, old and young," began Mr. Whacker.

Mary, just in front, was drinking in with upturned face the soft nothings of some young man; but she chanced to turn her head sufficiently to catch the start with which the Don aroused himself from his reverie at these words of his host.

"I thought you would like to see little Laura, too."

"Ah, yes, little Laura; it was very thoughtful of you."

"Have you ever heard the little thing sing? Upon my word, she promises to rival Lucy's talent for music. They get it from their mother. But here they are." And the old gentleman advanced with all the briskness of hospitality, if not of youth. Charley leaned forward, lifted Laura from the boat, and, kissing her, placed her upon the ground.

"Where is he?" cried she; "I don't see him." And she looked from face to face with shining eagerness. "Yonder he is," and away she skipped. "Here he is," she shouted, twining her arms around his knees; "here is Don Miff, sister Lucy."

There was a general smile, and he stooped and kissed her several times.

"And here is Mr. Fat-Whacker, sister Lucy," cried she, running up and taking my hand.

"Sister Lucy," her right hand held by one gentleman, her left by another, stood at this moment one foot on a seat, the other on the gunwale of the boat, balancing herself for a spring. It is certain that the color rose in her cheeks; but that may have been due to the rocking of the boat. Sister Lucy steadied herself for the leap.

"Mr. Fat-Whacker," began our merry tattler, addressing herself to the Don, "is the one—"

Lucy, remembering Richmond and Laura's side-walk confidences to the Don, on the occasion of her first interview with him, gave Mr. Fat-Whacker, as she sprang from the boat, a quick, appalled glance. He was equal to the occasion. "Yes," cried he, seizing the explanatory cherub and tossing her high in the air, "here's Mr. Fat-Whacker; and here," he added, with another toss, "is Mr. Uncle Whacker; and here," he continued, raising her at arm's length above his head and holding her there while he made at her some of those faces that were her delight, "here is *everybody*!"

Lucy gave Mr. F.-W. a glance, as she hurried past him to shake hands with the Don, that he thought was grateful; and he was stooping slightly to pat his little benefactress on the head, when he was sent whirling by a blow against the shoulder like that of a battering-ram.

It appears that Mrs. Poythress, during the merry confusion wrought by her little daughter, whether in her eagerness to shake hands with the man who, as she felt, had saved Lucy's life, or else thinking that she needed no assistance, had attempted to alight from the boat unaided; but tripping, in some way, she was falling at full length upon the frozen ground. The Don saw her danger. He was almost six feet away from the boat, my shoulder was in the way, and Lucy's fair hand was extended,—had touched his in fact,—when he sprang forward. 'Twas the spring of a leopard,—

as swift and as unerring. Crouching, he alighted beneath her before she reached the ground, caught her as though she had been a ball, and springing to one side lightly as a cat, placed her feet, without a jar, upon the ground.

"Are you much hurt?" asked he, with a singular mixture of respectful deference and eager interest.

Women, whether old or young, generally form their opinion of a man during the first five minutes of their acquaintance. Mrs. Poythress, at least, was won by those few words, that one look of the stranger, and believed in him from that hour.

"Our introduction has been informal," said she, extending her hand with a smile; "but you made my Lucy's acquaintance in a manner equally unconventional. I have long desired to greet you and thank you." And she raised her eyes to his. "I—" Mrs. Poythress paused. The Don stood holding her hand, bending over it, listening, but with eyes averted and cast upon the ground, reverence in every curve of his stalwart frame.

"You owe me no thanks," said he, in a low murmur, and without raising his eyes. "Far from it."

A mysterious feeling crept over Mrs. Poythress. Was it his eyes? Was it his voice? Or his manner? Was it something? Was it nothing? "I do feel rather weak. Perhaps I was a little jarred," said she; "may I lean on your strong arm?" Bending low, he offered her his arm as a courtier would to a queen, but without the courtier's smile; and they moved slowly towards the house.

"He is a gentleman of the old school," thought Mr. Whacker.

"One would think," mused Mary, "that he was already an accepted son-in-law."

"A case of nubbin," chirped Alice (a phrase I leave as a kind of sample bone of contention to the philologists of your day, my boy). She was leaning on Charley's arm, and raised her eyes inquiringly. "Somehow, though," added she, interpreting his silence as dissent, "somehow, I don't altogether believe so."

No reply.

She looked up again, and detected a faintly rippling smile struggling with the lines of his well-schooled features. He had heard her, then,—and half amused, half indignant, she gave his arm so sudden and vigorous a pull as visibly to disturb his balance.

"Why don't you answer people?" said she, a little testily.

"You would not have a man hasty? Is it not best to treat people's remarks as a hunter does wild ducks? Save your ammunition. Don't fire at the first that comes; wait till you can bring down three or four at a shot. Besides, it is rude."

"Rude?"

"Yes, to interrupt the current of people's observations."

"Well, you must interrupt the current of mine when I speak to you."

"The tr-tr-tr-ouble is I'd rather hear you talk than talk myself."

Three persons, walking behind this couple, had overheard these words,—to wit, Jones, Jones's girl, and myself. By Jones's girl I would be understood as referring to one of our Christmas party, through whose influence Jones had been led to infer that the lectures at the University immediately after Christmas were of comparatively minor importance. We were all struck by the absence of banter in Charley's last remark. Jones looked at me, and opening wide his eyes, and dropping his chin, formed his mouth into a perfect circle.

"The old fox is caught," whispered he; and taking another look, "sure pop!" he added,—an inelegant expression which I record with regret, and only in the interests of historic accuracy. Jones's girl, while we smiled at Charley, had her woman's eyes on Alice, and with raised brows and a nod directed our attention to her. Alice had obviously noticed the peculiar tone of Charley's voice, and coyly dropped her eyes. "Mr. Frobisher," she began, "I must beg your pardon."

"For what, pray?"

"For my rudeness in pulling your arm, just now!"

"Oh, don't speak of it," and then a merry twinkle coming into his eyes, "it didn't hurt a bit. I rather liked it. D-d-d-d-o it again."

Just then Jones turned quickly, and, with the delighted look of a discoverer, snapped his head, first at his girl and then at me.

"You saw it?"

His girl nodded assent. Jones looked at me inquiringly.

"What was it?" I whispered.

"He squeezed her hand with his arm,—most positively—didn't he?"

Jones's girl looked assent.

"Hard?"

She nodded again,—laughter-tears bedimming her young eyes.

"The villain!" breathed Billy; and throwing back his head, he showed two rows of magnificent teeth, while his mouth, though emitting no sound, went through all the movements of Homeric laughter.

"Will," said she, turning towards him,—*"Will,"* said she, softly, as she raised her eyes admiringly to his frank and manly face, "you are the greatest goose in the world."

"And you the dearest duck on earth."

So, at least, they seemed to me to say; but perhaps—for I admit that they spoke in whispers—perhaps I say this less as a hearer than as a Seer.

CHAPTER XL.

"WHERE is Mr. Smith?" asked Mrs. Carter, as she helped the company to soup.

"Yes, where is he?" repeated Mr. Whacker, looking up in surprise. "Perhaps he does not know that we are at dinner."

"After conducting me to the parlor," explained Mrs.

Poythress, "he excused himself and went to his room. I fancied he was not very well."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Whacker. "Zip, you go—"

Charley made a motion to Moses,—Zip for short,—and rising from the table and bowing his excuses, he left the room.

"I am a little afraid," continued Mrs. Poythress, turning to me, who chanced to be her nearest neighbor at table, "that your friend over-strained himself in that tremendous leap he made to save me from falling. I am sure I felt his arm tremble as we walked towards the house. Then he was so very silent. Is he always so?"

"Generally; though I do not think it is altogether natural to him. He seems to constrain himself to silence from some motive or other; but every now and then he loses control of himself, it would seem, and breaks forth into a real torrent of brilliant talk,—no, brilliant is not the word—though torrent is. When he bursts forth in this impassioned way, he carries everything before him. By the way, his leaping is of the same character. Do you know I had to change my shoes? For when he sprang to catch you, he actually knocked me into the water."

"What eyes he has! Such a concentrated look! And no one," she added after a pause, "has any idea who he is?"

"Not the slightest."

"Is it possible? What a number of strange people your dear old grandfather has contrived to bring to Elmington from time to time! Where he has found them all, or how they have found him, has always been a mystery to me."

"Yes, but the Don is not one of grandfather's captures. Charley must have the credit of bringing him in."

"Then he is a good man," replied she, with decision. "Charley never makes any mistakes. But here comes Master Charles."

Every one looked up on Charley's entrance. As for that young man, he looked neither to the right nor to

the left. "Mr. Smith will be down presently," said he to Mrs. Carter. As he strode around the room to take his chair, his firm-set lips wore a rather dogged expression, as though he would warn us all that, so far as he was concerned, the conversation was ended; and, hastily taking his seat, he began a vigorous attack on his soup, as if to overtake the rest of the company. Somehow every one was silent, and the isolated and rather rapid click of Charley's spoon was distinctly audible. Alice smiled, and conversation beginning to spring up around the table, "I fear your soup is cold," she began.

"The soup was cold?" asked he, looking up. "I am very sorry."

"I didn't say that," replied she, quickly. "I remarked that I was afraid yours was cold."

"Mine?" asked he, looking puzzled. "Why?"

"You were detained so long up-stairs."

"Oh!" said he, renewing the assault upon the soup.

"You are right," he added; "it is ratherish cool."

Alice was foiled. "I believe Mrs. Poythress called you."

Charley leaned forward.

"Nothing serious, I hope?" asked Mrs. Poythress.

All eyes were fixed on Charley, every ear intent to hear his answer to this question, which Mrs. Poythress alone had ventured to ask. For a moment this master of fence and parry stood confounded; but only for a moment. "Nothing to speak of," replied he, with careless simplicity, and, leaning back in his chair, he glanced at Uncle Dick. Richard, briskly, though with averted face, came to remove the soup-plate, and then hurried out of the room to have a quiet chuckle.

"Tain't no use, Polly; dey jess as well let Marse Charles alone. He is a keener, he is, umgh—umgh! Dey ain't gwine to git nothin' out o' him, ef you b'lieve Dick, dey ain't, mun." And the old worthy's sides shook with laughter. "Dey has been tetchin' her up pretty lively dis mornin', dat's a fac', and dey wet Dick's whistle for him, dey did, ef you b'lieve me, and more'n once, too. Well,

'Christmas comes but once a year,
Den every nigger git his shear.'

Hurry up, gal! hurry up!"

"Don't come round me, boy, wid your 'hurry up, hurry up.' Don't you see I'se hurryin' up all I kin hurry up already? I b'lieve you is drunk, anyhow!"

"Pretty close to it, thank de Lord.

'Christmas comes but once a year,
Every nigger—'

"I tell you git out o' dis kitchen, and mind you don't fall and break dat dish, wid your 'Christmas comes but once a year.' Go 'long, boy. Dat ham's seven years old, and you jess let it fall!"

"Hi!" thought Uncle Dick, as he entered the dining-room. "What's he doin' at de table?"

Richard was surprised.

For, as I am pained to have to say, the Virginians had in those days the very irrational habit of drinking before dinner; and it was to this fact that Uncle Dick alluded in the somewhat figurative language recorded above. If the truth must be told, our venerable serving-man never doubted but that the Don stayed up-stairs simply because he was too drunk to come down. The facts were far otherwise.

"Charley," said I that night, as we were smoking our last pipe, "what was the matter with the Don to-day? Why was he not with us when we sat down to dinner?"

"Because," said Charley, lazily lolling back in his rocking-chair, and sighting with one eye through a ring of smoke that he had just projected from his mouth,—“because he was in his room.”

"Another word, and Solomon's fame perishes."

"It is a well-known physical law" (Charley used to avenge himself on me in private for his silence in general company),—"it is a well-known physical law," said he, inserting his forefinger with great precision into the centre of the whirling ring, "that a body cannot occupy two—"

"To be continued in our next. But why was he not punctual, as usual?"

"Nothing simpler,—because he was behind time."

"Solon, Solon!"

"Yes, Sir William Hamilton has well observed that it is positively unthinkable that the temporal limitations of two events occurring at different times should be identical. Let's have another pipe."

Charley had forced me to change the subject; but I contrived to make the change not very satisfactory to him. "By the way," I began, "what were you and the charming Alice saying to one another on your way from the landing to-day?"

Charley laid his half-filled pipe on the table and gave a frightful yawn. "Let's go to bed," said he, and immediately began to doff his clothes with surprising swiftness.

"Two bodies," said I, striking a match, "cannot"—Charley kicked off one boot—"occupy the same space"—off flew the other; "but, as Sir William hath well put it,—or was it some other fellow?"—and leaning against the end of the mantel-piece, and poisoning myself on my elbow, I assumed a thoughtful attitude,—“two bodies are sometimes fond of being very close together. Why this sudden and uncontrollable somnolency? Were we not to have another pipe?” But not another word could I get out of Charley; and nearly four years passed by before he gave me the account (which I will now lay before the reader) of what he saw that day.

The Don, as we know, had escorted Mrs. Poythress from the landing at the foot of the lawn to the house, and had gone immediately to his room. As she leaned upon his arm, he had seemed to her to be tremulous; and a certain disorder in his features as he left the parlor had led her to fear that he was not well; having, as she surmised, given himself an undue wrench in his efforts to arrest her fall. Then, when the Don had failed to put in an appearance at dinner, Charley had gone in person to his room. To a gentle tap there was no reply, and successively louder knocks eliciting no

response, a vague sense of dread crept over him, and his hand shook as he turned the knob and entered the room. "Great God!" cried Charley, stopping short, as he saw the Don stretched diagonally across the bed, his face buried in a pillow. There he lay, still as death. Was he dead? Charley hurried to the bedside with agitated strides, and leaning over the prostrate figure, with lips apart, intently watched and listened for signs of life. "Thank God!" breathed Charley. For reply the Don, with a sudden movement, threw back his right arm obliquely across his motionless body, and held out his open hand. The released pillow fell. It was wetted with tears. Charley clasped the offered hand with a sympathetic pressure that seemed quite to unnerve the Don; for the iron grasp of his moist hand was tempered by a grateful tenderness, and convulsive undulations again and again shook his stalwart frame. For a while neither spoke.

"You will be down to dinner presently, I hope?"

The Don nodded, and Charley crossed the room and poured out some water and moved some towels in an aimless sort of way.

"I'll go down now; come as soon as you can."

Another nod.

Charley moved, half on tiptoe, to the door, and placing his hand on the knob, turned and looked at the Don. A sudden impulse seized him as he saw the strong man lying there on his face, his arm still extended along his back; and hurrying to the bedside, he bent over him, and taking the open hand in both his, with one fervent squeeze released it and hastened out of the room. But he had not reached the door before there broke upon his ear a sound that made him shiver.

It was a sob.

One!—No more! It was a sound such as we do not often hear and can never forget,—the sob of a strong man, bursting, hoarse, guttural, discordant, from an over-wrought heart,—a stern, proud heart that would stifle the cry of its bitterness, but may not. A look,—a word,—the touch of a friendly hand,—has sufficed to unprison the floods.

So, once, the dimpled finger of childhood pressed the electric key; and the primeval rocks of Hell-Gate bounded into the air.

CHAPTER XLI.

CHARLEY hurried along the upper hall, and arriving at the head of the stairs, blew his nose three times with a certain fierce defiance. This strictly commonplace operation he repeated in a subdued form as he neared the dining-room door, and stopping again, with one hand upon the knob, he passed the other again and again across his forehead and eyes, as though he had been an antiquated belle who would smooth out the wrinkles before entering a ball-room. Then, with that severe look of determined reticence of which I have spoken above, he entered the dining-room; exciting in all breasts, male and female alike, a keen but hopeless curiosity. This feeling, however, soon subsided; for the Don had entered shortly after Charley, and, begging Mrs. Carter to excuse his tardiness, had taken his seat and passed out of our minds. For besides that the dinner was good and the wines generous, most of us had our own little interests to look after. Jones, for example, and Jones's girl were too happy to care whether any one in the world were late or early for dinner. My grandfather, Mrs. Carter, and myself were sufficiently occupied as hosts,—and Charley, too, though he devoted his time principally to one guest. As a matter of fact, therefore, during the early part of the dinner the Don sat unobserved by the greater part of the company; and but for one faithful pair of eyes, I should have had nothing to record.

In the spirit of mischief, Alice had so manœuvred that the seat left vacant for the Don was between Lucy and little Laura. "Won't it be sweet, mother, to see all three of them in a row,—Lucy—Mr. Don Miff—Laura? Quite a little family party!"

"Very well," replied Lucy, laughing, "arrange it as

you will; I am sure I should like very well to sit by 'the Don.' Do you still call him by that name?"

"Of course. It has a grand sound, and grand sounds, you know, are precious to the female heart."

The Don's looks when he entered were downcast, his manner hesitating, and his voice, when he made his apologies to Mrs. Carter, scarcely audible. Charley, the moment the Don entered, had begun stammering away at Alice with a surprising volubility, and in a voice loud for him. He never stammered worse; and such a pother did he make with his m's and his p's that he drew upon himself the smiling attention of all the company; so that even Jones and his girl ceased murmuring, for a moment, their fatuous nothings. It was under cover of this rattling volley that the Don had taken his seat and begun intently to examine the monogram on his fork.

"Will you have some soup?" asked Charley, in a frank, off-hand way.

The commonplace nature of this question was an obvious relief to the Don, and he raised his eyes and looked about him. "Thanks, no soup. What!" said he, for the first time espying little Laura seated by his side, "you here by me!" And taking her sunny head between his hands, he bent over and kissed her on the forehead.

A mother's smile trembled in Mrs. Poythress's eyes. "She is a very little diner-out," said she.

At the sound of Mrs. Poythress's voice a shade passed over the Don's face. "He's the one, mumma, that built me the block-houses." And the smile came back.

Mary watched the play of the Don's features during the triangular conversation that followed between himself, Mrs. Poythress, and Laura, and was much puzzled. Light and shadow, shadow and light, chased each other over his changeful countenance like patches of cloud across a sunny landscape. Presently, chancing to turn his head, his eyes fell upon Lucy, seated on his right, and Mary's interest grew deeper.

"You on my right and Laura on my left! I feel that I am indeed among friends."

"You may be sure of that," said Lucy, in her low and sweet, but earnest voice.

The Don's pleasure at finding that Lucy was his neighbor at table was very obvious, and we must not blame Mary if it gave her a pang to see it. She could not but recall the stranger's manifest interest in Lucy when he first met her, at breakfast, in Richmond. Then she had not cared. Now it was different. For the next half-hour, while contributing her share to the conversation at her end of the table, she had managed to see everything that took place between the Don and Lucy. She saw everything, and yet she seemed to herself to see nothing. The meaning of it all—that she could not unravel. All she knew was that she was miserable; and her wretchedness made her unjust. She was vexed at Lucy,—vexed for the strangest of reasons; but the human heart—if the plagiarism may be pardoned—is full of inconsistencies. Had Lucy made eyes at the Don, coquetted with him, Mary would doubtless have thought it unkind on her part; though that would have been unjust, as Lucy had no cause to suspect that her friend felt any special interest in the mysterious stranger. It was the entire absence of everything of this kind in Lucy's manner that nettled Mary. In her eyes the Don was a hero of the first water. Why didn't Lucy try to weave fascinations around such an one as he? What kind of a man was she looking for? Did she expect the whole world to fall at her feet, whence to choose?—or did she, perhaps,—and the thought shot through her heart with a keen pang,—did Lucy feel that the quarry was hers without an effort on her part to grasp it?

The Don's deportment, too, if incomprehensible, was at least irritating. "His lordship," thought she, bitterly, "has hardly vouchsafed me a glance since he took his seat. Yet, before the Poythresses came—there he sits now, patting Laura's head in an absent way, and studying Lucy's features, as she talks, as though he were a portrait-painter. One would think he had quietly adopted the entire Poythress family. Upon my word, Mr. Sphinx is a marvel of coolness! How

little he talks, too!—and yet he has contrived to bring Lucy out wonderfully. She is rattling away like a child, telling him about herself and all the family. How interested he seems! Heavens, what a look!”

“Yes,” she had heard Lucy say, “Laura is a regular Poythress, with her high color and golden hair; mine is just like mother’s. I don’t mean now,” said she, with a little laugh and glancing at Mrs. Poythress’s snow-white hair; “but mother’s was coal-black once. It turned white—years ago—suddenly;” and she sighed softly, with downcast, pensive eyes, so that she did not observe the look of pain that her words had wrought and that had startled Mary. Looking up and seeing his face averted, Lucy thought he was admiring her little sister’s curls. “What beautiful hair Laura has!”

“Lovely,” replied he, tossing a mass of ringlets on the tips of his fingers.

“Won’t you make me a boat, after dinner, with rudder and sails and everything?” And Laura looked up into his troubled face with a confiding, sunny smile.

CHAPTER XLII.

At last, the ladies rose to leave the table.

“As soon, Mrs. Carter, as the gentlemen have had a cigar or so,” said Mr. Whacker, “we shall have the honor of joining the ladies in the parlor and of escorting you to the Hall, where we shall have some music.”

“But when he hears her play!” thought Mary, as she left the room, arm in arm with her dreaded rival.

“I drink your health,” cried the Herr, dropping down into his chair as soon as the ladies had left the room. “I drink your very good health,” said he, filling the Don’s glass. Of course he pronounced the words after his own fashion.

One would err who supposed that Herr Waldteufel

felt any unusual anxiety as to the physical condition of his neighbor. A decanter of sherry invariably wrought in his responsive mind a general but quite impartial interest in the well-being of all his friends. But on this occasion Mr. Whacker was particularly anxious that some limit should be put to the expression of that solicitude; and he checked with a glance the zealous hospitality of Uncle Dick, who was about to replenish the nearly exhausted decanters.

For this was to be a field day over at the Hall. There was to be a quintet,—think of that,—and a pint or so more sherry might disable the 'cello.

My grandfather had been looking forward to this glorious occasion with nervous joy. It had been several years since he had taken part in so august a performance; and before the first cigars were half burned out he had begun to fidget and look at his watch. Charley, therefore, was not long in proposing a move.

"Now, ladies," said my grandfather, on reaching the parlor, "I, for one, cannot understand how it is that there are some people who don't love music; but there are such people, and very good people they are, too. Now, this is Liberty Hall, and every one must do as he pleases. We are going to make some music; but no one need go with us who prefers remaining here. If there are any couples, for instance,"—and Mr. Whacker raised his eyes to the ceiling—"who have softer things to say than any our instruments can produce" (Jones and his girl looked unconscious), "let them remain and say them. Here is the parlor, there is the dining-room; arrange yourselves as you would. And now, Mrs. Poythress, will you take my arm and lead the way?"

Jones and Jones's girl were the first to move, and we were soon on our way across the lawn; while dark cohorts brought up the rear and covered the flanks of the merry column.

"To me!" said Mary, when the Don had offered her his arm. "I feel much honored." And with a formal bow she rested the tips of her fingers upon his sleeve.

The irony of her tones grated upon his ear, and he

turned quickly and bent upon her a puzzled though steady gaze.

"Honored?"

That look of honest surprise reassured her woman's heart, but made her feel that she had forgotten herself in meeting a courtesy with an incivility.

They always know just what to do.

Passing her arm farther within his, and leaning upon him with a coquettish pressure, she looked up with a gracious smile.

"Certainly. Have I not the arm of the primo violino,—the lion of the evening?"

And the primo violino wondered how on earth he had ever imagined that she was vexed.

Very naturally, I cannot remember, after the lapse of years, what quintet they played that evening. All that I distinctly recall is that it was a composition in which the piano was very prominent. My grandfather was (as I have, perhaps, said before) as proud of Lucy's playing as though she had been his own daughter; and I suspect that he and the Herr made the selection with a view to showing her off.

Mary thought she had never seen Lucy look so graceful as when, sounding "A," she turned upon the piano-stool, and, with her arm extended backwards and her fingers resting upon the keys, she gave the note to each of the players in turn; her usually serene face lit with the enthusiasm of expectancy. It was a truly lovely face,—lovely at all times, but peculiarly so when suffused with a certain soul-lit St. Cecilia look it wore at times like this. Alice sparkled, and Mary shone; but Lucy glowed,—glowed with the half-hidden fire of fervid affections and high and holy thoughts. Alice was a bounding, bubbling fountain, Mary a swift-flowing river, Lucy a still lake glassing the blue heavens in its unknown depths. Wit—imagination—soul.

It chanced that the piano had to open the piece alone, the other instruments coming in one after another. Nervously smoothing down her music with both hands, rather pale and tremulous, Lucy began.

"Why," thought Mary, gazing with still intensity from out the isolated corner in which she had seated herself,—“why does *he* look so anxious?”

For, coming to a rapid run, Lucy had stumbled badly, and the Don was pulling nervously at his tawny beard. But soon recovering her self-possession, she executed a difficult passage with ease and brilliancy. “Brava! brava!” cried he, encouragingly, while the Herr nodded and smiled. As for my grandfather, a momentary side-flash of delight was all he could spare the lovely young pianist; for with eyes intently fixed upon his score, and head bobbing up and down, he was in mortal dread of coming in at the wrong time. With him the merest nod of approval, by getting entangled with the nod rhythmic, might well have introduced a fatal error into his counting, while even an encouraging smile was not without its dangers.

Mrs. Poythress gave the Don a grateful smile.

“He seems to be taking Lucy under his protection,” thought Mary.

One after another the players came in; first the Don and Herr Waldteufel, then the second and the viola; and away they went, each after his own fashion; Charley pulling away with close, business-like attention to his notes; the Herr calm but smiling good-humoredly, when, from time to time, he stumbled through rapid passages where his reading was better than his execution; Mr. Whacker struggling manfully, with flushed cheeks and eager eyes, and beating time with his feet with rather unprofessional vigor. As for Lucy, relieved of her embarrassment, when fire had opened all along the line, she made the Herr proud of his pupil; while the Don, master of his score and his instrument, kept nodding and smiling as he played; watching her nimble fingers, during the pauses of his part, with undisguised satisfaction.

Mary, sitting apart, saw all this. Nor Mary alone.

“He is a goner!” whispered Billy to his girl, in objectionable phrase.

“Oh, yes; *hopelessly!*” looked she.

“Mr. Frobisher, too,—he’s another goner.”

The beloved of William glanced at Charley and bit her lip. Somehow it seemed comic to every one that Charley should be in love.

Then Billy, folding his arms across his deep chest, and summoning his mind to a vast generalization: "The fact is, everybody is a goner," said he; "as for me—"

His girl placed her finger upon her rosy lip, and reproved his chattering with a frown that was very, very fierce; but from beneath her darkling brows there stole, as she raised her eyes to his manly face, a glance soft as the breath of violets from under a hedge of thorns.

The allegro moderato came to an end with the usual twang twing twang.

"Unt we came out all togedder!" exclaimed the Herr. "Dot is someding already. Shentlemen und ladies, I tell you a little story, vot you call. Berlioz was once leading an orchestra, part professionals, part amateurs. Ven dey was near de ent of de stucke vot you call morceau, 'Halt, shentlemens!' cry Berlioz, rapping on the bulbit—desk, vot you call. 'Now, shentlemens amateurs,' says he, 'you just stop on dis bar unt let de oders blay, so dat we all come out togedder.'"

The excellent Herr, after laughing himself to the verge of asphyxiation, explained that "Berlioz, you unterstant, was a great vit, vat you call, unt make many funny words." It was a peculiarity of our friend Waldteufel that his pronunciation of English varied with the amount of water that he had neglected to drink; and as this was an uncertain quantity, you could never be quite sure whether he would say *was* or *was*, words or vords. At certain critical moments, too, when his soul stood vacillating between contentment and thirst, the two systems were apt to become mixed as above. I will add that I make no attempt at accuracy in reproducing his dialect, preferring to leave that, in part at least, as I have done in a parallel case, to the resources of the reader.

The remaining movements of the quintet were played in somewhat smoother style; but the only one

requiring special mention, for our purposes, was the *larghetto*, or slow movement. In this number, the technical difficulties of which were inconsiderable, Lucy's tender religious spirit revealed itself most touchingly. It so happened that the composer had placed this part mainly in the hands of the piano and the first violin, the other instruments merely giving an unobtrusive accompaniment. First the violin gave out the theme, and then the piano made reply.

"It is the communing of two spirits," felt Mary, in her imaginative way.

Now the piano gave forth its tender plaint, and the violin seemed to Mary to listen; at one time silent, at another interrupting,—assenting rather,—breaking into low-muttered interjections of harmonious sympathy. And then the violin would utter its lament, finding its echo in the broken ejaculations that rose from beneath Lucy's responsive fingers; so, at least, it seemed to Mary.

The quintet and the congratulations to the performers over, Mr. Whacker took pity on the thirsty Herr and ordered refreshments. Jones, finding among the rest a glass of double size, filled it and handed it to the 'cellist.

"Goot!" cried he, with a luminous wink; "I play do big fiddle already."

Mary smiled, wondering what "already" could mean; but she had other things to occupy her thoughts. When the Don rose from his seat and laid his violin upon the piano, she had been struck with the serenity of his countenance, whence the music seemed to have chased every cloud. He was looking for some one. Yes, it was for her. Catching her eye, he filled a glass, or two, rather, and coming to her side and taking a seat, he expressed the hope that she had enjoyed the music.

"More than I can express. You have convinced me that I have never heard any real music before. Do you know, your quintet was as pleasing to the eye as to the ear? You would have afforded a fine subject for a painter. Three young men, a lovely girl, and a grandfather, all bound together as one by the golden

chains of harmony! You can't imagine what a lovely picture you made."

"Thanks!"

"Oh," said she, smiling, "there were five of you, so I have paid you, at best, but one-fifth of a compliment."

"A vulgar fraction, as it were."

"Yes," said she, laughing; then with eyes cast down, and in a hesitating voice, she added, "I am going to make a confession to you; will you promise not to think me *very* foolish?"

"Such an idea, I am sure—"

"But, you know my friends all say I am so very sentimental,—that is to say, silly. You shake your head, but that is what they call me, and that is what it means."

"You do your friends injustice; but give me a specimen, that I may judge for myself."

"Do you promise not to agree with my friends?"

"Most solemnly."

"Well, you must know there is something very pathetic to me about old age. The sight of an old man sympathizing with the young, bearing up bravely under the ills of life and his load of years, always touches me to the heart. Now, you and Mr. Frobisher and Mr. Waldteufel—well, I need not comment on your appearance. Lucy—well, Lucy was just too lovely. She had what I call her inspired look, and was simply beautiful." And lifting her eyes for a second,—no, a second had been an age, compared with the duration of that glance so momentary and yet so intensely questioning,—she flashed him through and through. Through and through, yet saw nothing. The Don, felt he or not the shock of that electric glance, sat impassive, spoke no answer, looked no reply. She raised her eyes again to his. No, his look was not impassive; he was simply awaiting with interest the rest of her story. That, at least, was all she could see.

"Where was I?" she began again, driving from her mind, with an effort, a tumultuous throng of hopes

and fears. "Oh! well, you gentlemen handled your bows gracefully, of course, and all that, and Lucy was irresistible" (another flash), "of—course; but the central figure of the picture was Mr. Whacker. Dear Uncle Tom! Isn't he a grand old man? I don't know why it was, but when I saw in the midst of you his snowy head contrasting so strongly, so strangely, with Lucy's youthful bloom, with the manly vigor of the rest, my eyes filled with tears. Was it so very foolish?" And her eyes, as she lifted them to his, half inquiring, half deprecatory, were suffused afresh with the divine dew of sympathy.

"Foolish!" exclaimed the Don, with a vehemence so sudden that it made her start, his nostrils dilating and a dark flush mounting even to his forehead,—
"foolish!" And bending over her he poured down into her swimming eyes a look so intense and searching that she felt that he was reading her very heart.

"Thanks!" said he, with abrupt decision. "Thanks!"

Mary breathed quicker, she knew not why. The tension was painful. "Yes," said she, rather aimlessly, "and then you all looked so earnest, so serenely happy, so forgetful of this poor sordid world."

"Yes," said he, musingly, "that seems to me the office of music,—to give rest to the weary, to smooth out the wrinkles from the brain and brow, to give respite; to enable us, for a time, at least, to forget."

He seemed to muse for a moment, then turning suddenly to her with a changed expression: "It was always so," said he; then looking up quickly, "Do you like Homer?"

"Homer!" exclaimed she, startled by the abrupt transition. "I cannot say that he is one of my favorite authors."

"Do you know, I cannot understand that?"

"He is so very, very old," pleaded she, in extenuation.

"So is the human heart, of which he was master; so is the ocean, to which he has been compared,—eternal movement and eternal repose. But what you said just now, as to the Lethean effect of music, reminded

me of that grand scene in the Iliad, where Ulysses and Phoenix and Ajax go, as ambassadors of Agamemnon, to Achilles, with offerings and apologies for the wrong that has been done him. This man, whose heart was full of indignant shame because of the insults which had been heaped upon him,—who, though the bravest of the Greeks, had gone apart by the sea-shore to weep bitter tears,—him they found solacing his sorrows with music. But a little while ago and he had been ready to strike Agamemnon dead in the midst of his troops. What a surprise when the poet draws the curtain, and there flashes upon our astonished eyes the inexorable, flinty-hearted captain of the Myrmidons seated with his friend Patroklos, peacefully singing to his lyre the illustrious deeds of heroes! What a master-stroke!" cried he, with flashing eyes. "It is like the sudden bursting upon the view of a green valley in the midst of barren rocks. And you don't like Homer?"

"Oh, that is beautiful, really beautiful!" she hastened to say, abashed at the sentiment she had just uttered. "One often fails to see beauties till they are pointed out. Won't you talk to me some day about Homer?"

"Gladly," said he; and he smiled, then almost laughed aloud.

"Ah, it is really unkind to laugh at me!"

"Not at all. I was laughing to think how little you dream what you are drawing down upon your head when you ask me to talk to you about Homer. You see I, too, have a little confession to make."

"What is it?" she asked, eagerly.

"Perhaps I should have said confidence rather than confession; but, upon second thought—"

"Oh, do tell me!"

He hesitated.

"I shall positively die with curiosity!"

"If there be any danger of that," said he,—and he put his forefinger and thumb in his vest-pocket and looked at her and smiled.

"Well?"

"Will you promise not to think me so very, very

foolish?" said he, mimicking her tones of a little while before. And he drew an object from his pocket and held it up.

"What is it,—a book?"

"Yes, a book;" removing from a much-worn morocco case a small volume.

"Oh, yes, your Testament!"

Mary had not forgotten what I had told of a certain incident that had occurred in the Don's rooms in Richmond, and had heedlessly alluded to it.

"My Testament!" said he, with a quick, suspicious look.

She felt that she had blundered; but Mary Rolfe, like the majority of her sex, was a woman. "Why, isn't it a Testament?" asked she, carelessly; "it has just the look of some of those little English editions." And she held out her hand.

"Oh!" said the Don, looking relieved. "No, it is not a Testament."

"What is it, then?" said she, her hand still extended.

"It is a copy of the Iliad; and my little confession is, that I have carried it in this pocket ever so many years."

"Indeed!" cried Mary, much interested.

"So, you see, when you ask *me* to talk to you about Homer, you are getting yourself into trouble, most probably."

"Let me have it."

The Don smiled and shook his head.

"What!" cried she, with amazement, "I may not touch it?"

"Well, as a special favor, you may; but it must not go out of my possession. Here, you hold that lid and I this. No, this way," added the Don, rising. He had been seated on her right; but now placing his chair to her left, he held out the little volume to her, holding the left lid, together with a few pages, between finger and thumb. What could be his object in changing his position? Was there something written on the fly-leaf? She gave a quick glance at his face, but instantly checked herself and broke out into a merry laugh.

"How perfectly absurd!" said she. "We look, for all the world, like two Sunday-school children reading the same hymn-book! What!" exclaimed she, with quick interest, and looking up into his face: "The original Greek?"

"Yes," replied he, quietly; "no real master-piece can ever be translated."

Just then some chords were sounded on the piano, and the Don turned and looked in that direction. Mary raised her eyes and scanned his face narrowly. She was reading him afresh by the light he had just cast upon himself.

For her, being such as she was, this man of surprises had acquired a new interest.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"LADIES unt shentlemens, I have de pleasure to announce dot Miss Lucy will now favor de company mit a song." The Herr was seated at the piano, while Lucy stood by his side.

"What! does she sing, too?" inquired the Don, with interest.

"Oh, yes; Lucy has a very sweet voice."

The Don sat and listened, with a pleased smile, nodding approvingly from time to time. "Not very strong," remarked he, when the song was ended, "but, as you say, sweet and sympathetic—very."

A second ballad was called for, which Lucy gave, and then her mother suggested Schubert's "Serenade." She had hardly sung half a dozen notes, when Mary noticed a peculiar expression on the Don's face. It was a face which, when in repose, was always grave, to say the least; and there were times when it seemed to many stern, even grim. But now as he gazed, wide-eyed and dreamy, upon the bank of coals before him, the firm lines of his features melted into an inexpressible softness.

"Oh, that I were a musician, to bring that beautiful look into his face! Lucy's fingers have stolen half his heart, her voice the rest." Thus sighed Mary in the depths of her troubled spirit.

The Don rose softly from his seat. "Excuse me," said he; and moving silently and on tiptoe across the room, took up his violin, placed it under his chin, and poising the bow over the strings, stood there waiting for a pause in Lucy's song. By Lucy alone, of all the company, had these movements of the Don been unobserved; and when there leaped forth, just behind her and close to her ear, the vibrating tones of the Guarnerius, echoing her own, she gave a quick start and a pretty little "oh!" but turning and seeing the Don behind her, she beamed upon him with a radiant smile.

"Aha, an obligato! so!" cried the Herr. "Very goot, very goot." And he bent him over the piano with renewed zeal.

If I knew what an "obligato" was, I would tell you most cheerfully; but even Charley could never get it into my head. It was not an accompaniment, that I know; for the Herr was playing the accompaniment himself.

"I tell you venn to come in," said the Herr to Lucy, who was naturally a little confused at first. "Now—ah—so, very goot."

This time the Don broke in here and there upon Lucy's song in a fragmentary kind of way, as it seemed to me, and just as fancy dictated, producing a very weird and startling effect; and when the pause came in her score, he continued the strain in an improvisation full of power and wild passion. "Wunderschön! Ben trovato!" cried the Herr, lapsing into and out of his mother-tongue in his enthusiasm.

I gave the reader to understand, when I brought him acquainted with Waldteufel, that he was a musician of far greater ability than one would have expected to find teaching in a country neighborhood; regretfully giving the reason for this anomaly. Aroused now by the Don, he showed the stuff that was in him; dashing off an improvisation full of feeling on the theme

of the "Serenade." "Now," said he, striking the last notes, "coom again, coom. Vot you got to say now?" he added, in challenge.

The Don gave a slight bow to Lucy.

"Ah, das is so,—I forgot."

Lucy began anew, her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkling with excitement, nodding approval, first to one, then to the other of the rival artists, as each in turn gave proof of his virtuosity. Schubert's "Serenade" is of a divine beauty, and improving upon it is like adding polish to Gray's "Elegy." But such considerations did not disturb our little audience. Our local pride was up. The stranger had been carrying everything before him, and when our honest Herr came back at him with a Roland for his Oliver, as described above, there had been a lively clapping of hands. And now, first one or two, then the entire company had risen in a body and clustered around the performers, applauding and cheering each in turn, but the Herr, as I remember, most warmly; for few of us had ever heard him improvise before, and, besides, he seemed to deserve special encouragement for his pluck in contending with this Orpheus, newly dropped among us from the skies, as it were.

Mary had not at first risen with the rest. An unconquerable reserve was her most marked trait. But at last even she rose (not being able, perhaps, to see the Don from where she sat), but did not join the cluster that surrounded the piano. She stood apart, resting her elbow upon the mantel-piece, her cheek upon her hand, listening to the music,—the music half drowned by the fevered tattoo her own heart was beating. For now Lucy was singing the last stanza of the song, and the Herr had dropped into something like an accompaniment, while the Don, seeing that his antagonist had called a truce, had reined his own muse down into a "second." Sustained by this and rising with her enthusiasm, Lucy's voice came forth with a power and a pathos it had not shown before; and the mellow Guarnerius, kindling and enkindled in turn, rose to a passion almost human in its intensity. And

before Mary's eyes there seemed to float, as voice and violin rose and fell, and fell and rose, a vision (and it was her nature to dream dreams); there floated a vision as of two souls locked in eternal embrace and borne aloft on the wings of divinest music.

She did not close her eyes that night; for, to add to the perturbation of her spirit, Mrs. Poythress, seeing Charley making ready to cross the River and spend the night under her roof, as he did every Friday, had so cordially invited the Don to accompany him that he, when the invitation was warmly seconded by Mr. Poythress and Lucy, had, after some hesitation, consented to do so.

He had entered the very grotto of Circe.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE Poythresses were cordiality itself. No sooner had the Don's foot crossed their threshold, than Mr. Poythress, taking him by the hand, gave him a warm welcome to Oakhurst. "Yes, you are truly welcome," said Mrs. Poythress, taking the other hand; while Lucy, too, smiled in hospitable assent.

The latter has told me since that she was struck, at the time, with a certain something very singular in his manner of meeting these courtesies. As the boat had neared the shore, she had observed that the Don grew more and more silent; and now, in response to greetings of such marked cordiality, he had merely bowed, — bowed low, but without a word. "Are you cold?" asked Mrs. Poythress, looking up into his face, as they entered the sitting-room. "Why, you are positively shivering! Mr. Poythress, do stir the fire. Are you subject to chills? No?"

"The wind was very keen on the River," said the Don. He spoke with difficulty, and as he leaned over the fire, warming his hands, his teeth chattered.

Charley whispered to Mrs. Poythress.

"Not a drop," replied she; "you know Mr. Poythress will not allow a gill of anything of the kind to be kept in the house. I am so sorry."

"Well, it does not matter. Do you know it is past one o'clock? Suppose all of you go to bed and leave him to me."

"Now," said Charley, when he and the Don were left alone, "let's adjourn to the dining-room and have a quiet pipe, after the labors of the evening. I don't know why it is," continued Charley, as they entered the room, "but fiddling—" Here Charley quickly drew back, as a horse when sharply reined up, with a look that seemed to show that his eyes had fallen upon some unwelcome object. The suppression of all appearance of emotion was, as we know, a foible of his. There was one thing, however, which he could not suppress; and it was this which often betrayed him to his friends; to wit, his infirmity of stammering; of which, as I do not care either to deface my pages or to make sport of my friend, I shall give but sparing typographical indication, leaving the rest to the reader's imagination. "F-f-f-fiddling," continued he, "always gives me a consuming thirst for a smo-mo-mo-moke. By the way, thirst for a smoke strikes me as a mixed metaphor, but 'hunger' would scarcely improve matters. I presume that if our Aryan ancestors had known the divine weed, we should have had a better word wherewithal to express our longing for it."

Whenever Charley began to stammer and philosophize, he always suggested to my mind a partridge tumbling and fluttering away through the grass; there was always a nest somewhere near.

"As it is," continued he, "we must be content to borrow from the grovelling vocabulary of the eater and the drinker, leaving to civilization—there, toast your toes on that fender—to evolve a more fitting term."

The Don, who had been looking serious enough before, could not suppress a smile at this quaint sally of our friend,—a smile that broadened into a laugh when Charley, having succeeded, after a protracted struggle, in shooting a word from his mouth as though from a

pop-gun, parenthetically consigned all p's and m's to perdition; that being the class of letters which chiefly marred his utterance.

There is, about the damning of a mere labial, a grotesque impotency that goes far towards rescuing the oath from profanity; and we may hope that Uncle Toby's accusing angel neglected to hand this one in for record.

"This is very snug," said Charley, drawing together the ends of logs which had burned in two.

Charley had neglected to light the lamp, but the logs soon began to shed a ruddy glow about the room, in the obscure light of which the stranger began to look about him, as was natural. Charley could always see more with his eyes shut than I could with mine wide open; but I cannot very well understand how, in that dimly-lighted room, he contrived to observe all that he pretends to have seen on this occasion; especially as he acknowledges that he was steadily engaged at his old trick of blowing smoke-rings, sighting at them with one eye, and spearing them with the forefinger of his right hand.

The stranger did not stroll about the room with his hands behind his back, examining the objects on the sideboard, and yawning in the faces of the ancestral portraits, as he might have been pardoned for doing at that hour, and in the absence of the family. "Yes, this is very snug," echoed he, in a rather hollow voice, while he glanced from object to object in the room with an eager interest that contrasted strangely with the immobility of his person; his almost motionless head giving a rather wild look to his rapidly-roving eyes. Presently, seeming to forget Charley's presence, he gave vent to a sigh so deep that it was almost a groan. Charley removed his pipe from his mouth, and with the stem thereof slowly and carefully traced a very exact circle just within the interior edge of one of his whirling smoke-wreaths, in the spinning of which he was so consummate an artist.

The stranger, coming to himself with a little start, gave a quick glance at the sphinx beside him, who,

with head resting on the back of his chair and eyes half closed, was lazily admiring another blue circle, that rose silently whirling in the still air. Had he heard the moan? And in his embarrassment the stranger seized the tongs and, with a nervous pull, tilted over one of the logs which Charley had drawn together on the hearth.

They flashed into a blaze.

"Why, hello!" exclaimed the stranger, chancing to cast his eye into the corner formed by the projecting chimney-piece and the wall. "There's a dog. He seems comfortable," he added, glad, seemingly, to have hit upon so substantial a subject of conversation. "That rug seems to have been made for him. Does he sleep there every night?"

"That's his corner, whenever he wants it," said Charley, rather dryly, and without looking towards the dog. "Let me fill your pipe for you."

Charley, somehow, did not seem anxious to talk about the dog, but his companion, not observing this, very likely, would not let the subject drop. Rising a little in his chair and peering into the somewhat obscure corner: "He seems to be a—a—"

"Pointer," said Charley. "He is very old," added he, by way of a finisher.

"Oh, I understand,—an old hunting-dog of Mr. Poythress's that he cherishes now for the good he has done in his day."

This was not exactly a question, but it seemed to require some sort of a reply.

"Well, yes, so one would naturally think; but Mr. Poythress was never much of a Nimrod. It is Mrs. Poythress who claims the old fellow as her property, I believe."

Charley pulled out his watch in rather a nervous way, looked at the time, and, thrusting it back into his pocket, gave a yawn.

"What rolls of fat he has along his back!" said the stranger, rising, and taking a step or two in the direction of the sleeper.

"Yes," said Charley, rising, and knocking the ashes

from his pipe with a few rapid taps, "it is the way with all old dogs."

"Ah, I am afraid I have disturbed the slumbers of the old fellow," said the Don, softly retracing his steps.

"He is as deaf as a post," said Charley.

The old pointer had raised his head, and was rocking it from side to side with a kind of low whimpering.

"Speaking of slumbers," said Charley, looking at his watch again, and closing it with a snap, "suppose—"

"What can be the matter with the old boy?"

The dog was acting singularly. He had risen to his feet, and, with staggering, uncertain steps, was moving first in this direction then in that, sniffing the air with a whine that grew more and more intense and anxious.

"He will soon get quiet, if we leave him." And Charley made two or three rapid strides towards the door, then stopped as suddenly, stopped and stood biting his nails with unconscious vigor, then slowly turned, and, walking up to the mantel-piece, rested his elbow upon it and his cheek upon his hand. The attitude was one of repose; but his quick breathing, his quivering lips, his restless eyes that flashed searchingly, again and again, upon the face of his companion,—these told a different story.

"He is trying to find you," said the Don, with a sympathetic smile. "Poor old fellow, he seems blind as well as deaf. Hello! he is making for me. What! is he in his dotage? Whom does he take me for?" he added, as the old dog, coming up to him and sniffing at his feet and legs with an ever-increasing eagerness, kept wriggling and squirming and wagging his tail with a vigor that was remarkable, considering his apoplectic figure and extreme age. Growing more and more excited, the old creature tried again and again to rear and place his paws upon the breast of the Don; but his weak limbs, unable to sustain his unwieldy bulk, as often gave way; and at last, with a despair that was almost human, he laid his head between the knees of the young man; and rolling his bleared, opaque eyes, as if searching for his face, he whimpered as

though for help. The Don looked bewildered, and glancing at Charley, saw him standing, motionless, leaning upon the mantel-piece, his eyes fixed upon the fire. The Don started, then bent a sudden, eager glance upon the dog. The latter again strove to rear up, but falling back upon his haunches, lifted up his aged head, and rolling his sightless eyes, gave forth a low howl so piteous as must have moved the hardest heart.

It was then that the stranger, that man of surprises, as he had done once or twice before in the course of this story, revealed by a sudden burst of uncontrollable impetuosity the fervid temperament that ordinarily lay concealed beneath his studied reserve. Stooping forward like a flash, he lifted the dog and placed his paws upon his breast, sustaining him with his arms.

It was touching to witness the gratitude of the old pointer, his whining and his whimpering and his eagerness to lick the face that he might not behold. He was happy, let us hope, if but for a moment. Suddenly he fell,—fell as though stricken with heart-disease, all in a heap; then tumbling over and measuring his length along the carpet, his head came down upon the floor with a thump.

There he lay motionless,—motionless, save that every now and then his tail beat the floor softly, softly, and in a sort of drowsy rhythm, as though he but dreamt that he wagged it,—gently tapped the floor and ceased; once more, and stopped again, and yet again; and he was still. The stranger knelt over the outstretched form of the dying pointer.

“Ponto! Ponto, old boy! Can you hear me? Yes? Then good-by, dear old fellow, good-by!”

Deaf as he was, and breathing his last, that name and that voice seemed to penetrate the fast-closing channels of sense; and with two or three last fluttering taps—he had no other way—he seemed to say farewell, and forever.

The young man rose, and, staggering across the room, threw his arm over his face and leaned against the wall. Charley made two or three hasty, forward

strides, then halted with a hesitating look, then springing forward, placed a hand on either shoulder of the figure before him, and leaned upon his neck.

"Dory!" whispered he, in a voice that trembled.

A shiver, as from an electric shock, ran through the stalwart frame of the stranger. For a moment he seemed to hesitate; the next he had wheeled about, and, clasping his companion in his mighty arms, hugged him to his breast.

"Charley!" cried he, in a broken voice; and his head rested upon the shoulder of his friend.

CHAPTER XLV.

I GREATLY fear that when I stated, somewhere in the course of the foregoing narrative, that I had firmly resolved to exclude love-making from its pages,—I greatly fear that none of my readers gave me credit for sincerity. Yet it was not a stroke of Bushwhackerish humor; I was in sober earnest, and was never more convinced than at this moment of the folly of breaking my original resolution. Here I am with three pairs of lovers on my hands,—all sighing like very furnaces—I, who am quite incapable of managing one couple. I suppose I have only myself to blame. I assembled a number of young Virginians in a country house. I should have known better. Yet, when I brought them together, it was an understood thing (on my part, at least) that there was to be no nonsense.

The truth is, I think I have a just right to complain of my characters. I had a little story to tell,—the simplest in the world—the merest monograph,—and I introduced the main body of my personages as a setting, merely; just as a jeweller surrounds a choice stone with small pearls to bring its color into fuller relief.

And here they are, upsetting everything.

Look at Billy, for instance. I could not have gotten

on at all without him. In the first place, no Christmas party at Elmington could have been complete without him and his jovial laugh. It would have been against all nature not to have invited him, and equally against Billy's nature to have stayed away. But as ill luck would have it, his girl, though of a different county, must needs be of the party; but I, knowing nothing of this, caused him to gallop up to the Hall, that cold Christmas Eve, simply that he might enliven the company with his "Arkansas Traveller" and the rest of his not very classic repertoire, and still more by his memorable dive under the table. Now I like my Billy; but his loves are not to our purpose. And so—for I cannot have the course of my story marred any longer by his antics—I have shipped him off to the University. Imagine him bursting into No. 28, East Lawn, and shaking his room-mate's hand to the verge of dislocation. Five or six cronies have crowded in to welcome the truant back (writhing, each in turn, under the grasp of his obtrusively honest hand).

"No, Tom, you need not take that old gourd out of the box. My fiddling days are over."

"What!" exclaimed an indignant chorus.

"Come back solemn?" asked Tom. "Bad luck?"

Billy colored a little. "Solemn? Not I. But oh, boys, I have such a story to tell you! You like to hear *me* scrape,—wh-e-e-w!"

"What is it?"

Jones threw back his head and gave a roar as though Niagara laughed. While he is telling the story of his discomfiture we will take our leave of him; for as soon as the chorus have departed, he will begin to tell his friend Tom about his girl, and we have no time to listen to any more of that. But he is such a good fellow that I think we may forgive him the delay his loves have cost us.

It is somewhat harder to pardon Charley's falling in love so inopportunately; but even as to him my heart relents when I remember that it was his first offence, and how penitent, how sheepish, even, were his looks, whenever I alluded to his fall. Let him go on casting

out of the corners of his eyes timid, admiring glances at the inimitable Alice; drinking in deep, intoxicating draughts of her merry, laughter-spangled talk; happy in her presence; in her absence fiercely wondering why, in this otherwise wisely-ordered world (as we Virginians have been taught to believe it), he alone was a stammering idiot. Let all this go on, and more; but as with Jones, so with Charley, their loves must equally be brushed from the path of this story.

The case of lover No. 3 presents greater difficulties. When I recall certain passages of the preceding narrative, I am forced to acknowledge that, in the case of the Don, I have unwittingly entered into an implied obligation to my readers. Unwittingly, for I solemnly assure them that when (for instance) I described the gallant rescue of Alice and Lucy by the stalwart stranger, it did not so much as cross my mind what tacit promise I thereby held out. Had I been a novelist or even a novel-reader, instead of the philosopher and bushwhacker that I am, it could not have escaped me that by suffering two of my heroines to be valiantly rescued from deadly peril by a handsome, nay, a mysterious and hence painfully interesting young man, I had, in effect, signed a bond to bring about a marriage between the rescuer and one of the rescued, or both; the more charming of the two being reserved for the end of the book, the less to be thrown in earlier as a sort of matrimonial sop to Cerberus,—an hymeneal luncheon, as it were. Yes, I allowed one of my heroes to rescue two of my heroines, while a third gazed trembling upon the scene from her latticed window. Nay, worse; for whether drawn on insensibly by the current of events, or hurried thereto by the entreaties of my friend and collaborator, Alice, who, woman-like, declared that she would have nothing to do with my book unless I put some love in it,—whether inveigled, therefore, or cajoled, it is a fact that I have made allusion here and there, in the course of these pages, to such sighings and oglings and bosom-heavings and heart-flutterings, accompanied by such meaning starts and deep ineffable glances, that I am willing to

admit what Alice claims: that it would be almost an actual breach of faith not to tell people what it all meant.

"If you are going to write a novel, Jack" (I have been plain Jack since she married Charley), "why don't you write one and be done with it?"

"How many times must I tell you that I am not writing a novel, but a philosophico-bushwhackerian monograph on the theme—"

"Bushwhackerian fiddlestick!" cried Alice, impatiently, but unable to suppress a smile at the rolling thunder of my title. "You may write your monograph, as you call it, but who would read it?"

It was during this discussion that Alice agreed to edit the love-passages that illumine these pages. But *what* love-passages? After much debate we effected a compromise. If she would engage to spare the reader all save a mere allusion to the heart-pangs of the jovial Jones, she should have full liberty to revel through whole chapters in the loves of the Don. "As for your little affair with Charley," I added, "I agree to dress that up myself."

"Indeed, indeed, Jack, if you were to put Mr. Frobisher and myself in your book—and—and—make him—"

"Make him—" (Here I smiled.)

"You know, you villain!"

"Stammer forth praises of your loveliness?"

"You dare!"

And so we are reduced to a single pair of lovers: the Don and—

CHAPTER XLVI.

BUT he was enough. At the period at which we are now arrived, his conduct became more perplexing than ever. The neighborhood was divided into two camps, one maintaining that Mary found favor in his eyes, the other that Lucy and music had carried the day. Most

of the gentlemen were of the latter party. They pointed out his frequent visits across the River, the hours he spent playing for or with her, his obvious efforts to win the good-will of her mother. Some few of the girls were on our side; and I remember that they, at times, commented with some asperity on the alleged court that the Don paid Mrs. Poythress,—rather plainly signifying that in *their* case a swain would find it to his interest to make love to them rather than to their mothers. But a majority of the girls, headed by Alice, scouted the idea of the Don's being enamoured of the gentle Lucy; the difference between their party and that of the men being that they could give no reason for the faith that was in them. They thought so—they knew it—well, we should see—persisted they, in their irritating feminine way.

As a natural result of this state of things, there arose among us a sort of anti-Don party. His popularity began to wane. What did he mean by playing fast and loose with two girls? Why did he not declare himself for one or the other? Who *was* he, in fact?

But against this rising tide of disapprobation Charley was an unfailing bulwark. It was obvious to all that a close intimacy had sprung up between Frobisher and the Don. They were continually taking long walks together. Secluded nooks of porches became their favorite resting-places. The murmur of their voices was often to be heard long after the rest of the family had retired for the night. Charley, therefore, gave this suspicious character the stamp of his approval, and that approval sustained him in our little circle. I say *our* little circle, though I, of course, had long since returned to Richmond, and my supposed practice at the bar. Fortunately for the reader, Alice remained on the scene; else where had been those delicious love-passages that are in store for us?

Of all this circle, Alice was most eager to ascertain the actual state of the Don's sentiments. Nor was hers an idle curiosity. Her penetrating eyes had not failed to pierce the veil of bravado by which Mary had sought to hide her heart from her friend. But did *he*

love *her*? She believed so,—believed half in dread, half in hope. Now was the time to learn something definite.

For the Poythresses had given a dinner, and she and Charley were promenading up and down the Oakhurst piazza. Presently, there sounded from the parlor the “A” on the piano, followed by those peculiar tones of a violin being tuned,—tones so charmingly suggestive, to lovers of music, so exasperating to others.

“Ah, they are going to play!” said my grandfather, quickly; and he turned to go into the parlor, followed by all of the promenaders save Charley and Alice, who still strode to and fro, arm in arm.

“They are going to play,” repeated he, as he got to the door, turning and nodding to Charley, and then passed briskly within.

At this some of the girls smiled, and Charley reddened, poor fellow, and bit his lip; while Alice gazed, unconscious, at two specks of boats in the distance.

Suddenly Mr. Whacker reappeared, thrusting his ruddy countenance and snowy hair between the fair heads of two girls who were just entering the door,—a pleasing picture.

“The Kreutzer Sonata!” he ejaculated at Charley, and disappeared.

At this the two girls fairly giggled aloud, and, darting Parthian glances at Alice, tumbled through the hall into the parlor.

“What merry, thoughtless creatures we girls are!” said Alice, removing her gaze from the specks of sails.

“Yes, and no fellow can find out, half the time, what you are laughing about,—or thinking about, for the matter of that.”

“What! do *you* deem us such riddles,—you who, they say, can read one’s thoughts as though we were made of glass?”

“I? And who says that of me, pray?”

“Everybody says it. *I* say it,” she added, with a smile of saucy defiance.

“I read people’s thoughts!”

“Do you disclaim the gift?”

"Even to disclaim it would be preposterously vain."

Charley would have avoided that word "preposterous" had he bethought him, in time, how many p's it contained. His face was red when he had stumbled and floundered through it, and his eyes a trifle stern. He had been a stammerer from boyhood, but of late his infirmity had begun to annoy him strangely.

"Then, modest young man, I suppose you have yet to learn the alphabet of mind-reading?"

"Yes,—that is, women's minds."

"Women's minds? Do you think that we are harder to read than men? Do you think, for example, that people find it harder to see through such an unsophisticated girl as myself than such a deep philosopher as you?"

"You? Why, you are an unfathomable m-m-m-mystery?" ("Confound it!")

"The idea! I a mystery? And this from you, unreadable sphinx!"

"Yes, and unfathomable! Why, I have no idea what you think upon the—upon—well, all sorts of subjects."

Charley caressed with a shy glance the toes of his boots, and felt red.

"Indeed? How strange!" And she gazed upon the dots of boots and felt pale.

"Yes; for example, I have often wondered what in fact, for example, you thought, for instance, of—of—of—me, for instance. Oh, no, no, of course not, I beg your pardon; of course I never imagined for a moment, of course not, that you ever thought of me at all, in fact. What I mean is, that whenever you did think of me,—though I presume you never did for an instant, of course,—I mean that if by chance, when you had nothing else to think about, and I happened to pass by— Oh, Lord!" cried Charley, claspings in his hand his burning brow.

What is the matter with my people? Chatterbox reduced to monosyllables, and the Silent Man pouring forth words thick as those that once burst from the deep chest of Ulysses of many wiles; and *they*, as we all know, thronged thick as flakes of wintry snow.

"Don't you think I am an idiot? Have you the least doubt of it?" exclaimed the poor fellow, with fierce humility.

Alice gave a little start and looked up.

"A confounded stammering idiot?"

"Mr. Frobisher!"

He didn't mean it. Charley could never have done such a thing on purpose; but his left arm suddenly threw off all allegiance to his will, and actually pressed a certain modest little dimpled hand against his heart so hard that it blushed to the finger-tips. Alice looked down with quickened breath, slackened pace; but Charley swept her forward with loftier stride, drawing in mighty draughts of air, and glaring defiance at the universe. He did not, however, stride over the railing at the end of the piazza. Taking advantage of the halt—

"Strangel!" said Alice, in a low voice; "do you know that I, too, have often wondered what you thought of me? Seeing you sitting, silent and thoughtful, while I was rattling on in my heedless way, I often wondered whether you did not think me a chatterer destitute as well of brains as of heart. No? Really and truly? You are very kind to say so!"

"Kind!" exclaimed Charley. "Kind! * * *

* * * * * " * " said Alice, looking down— " * * *

* * * * * " * " continued Charley, " * * * *

yes, * * * first and only * * * Richmond
* * * very first moment * * * never again
* * * dreaming and waking * * * despair
* * * torments of the * * * * * abyss!"

" * * * mere passing fancy? * * * as ever
were caught out of it. * * * Richmond * * * week
* * * out of sight, out of * * * * "

" * * * ey, fiercely, * * * * * while
life * * * yonder river flows down to the sea *
* * * by all that's * * * never * * * *
so long as the stars * * * * * no,
never!"

"* * * naturally enough * * * country-house * * * passing whim * * * absence * * * another dear charmer * * * effaced."

"No * * * graven * * * indelible * * * revolve upon its axis * * * sheds her light * * * shall beat * * * obliterated!"

"* * * others * * * vows * * * before * * * and yet * * * woman's confiding nature * * * forgotten."

"* * * then if * * * bid me * * * not * * * altogether * * * permit me * * * absolute aversion * * * grow into * * * time * * * fidelity * * * ray of hope?"

"* * * so totally unexpected," [Oh!!! J. B. W.] " * * * breath away with surprise * * * my own mind * * * test * * * both of us * * * for the present * * * as though not said."

"* * * said he " * * * absolute dislike?"

"* * * dropping her eyes, " * * * cannot altogether deny * * * at times * * * acknowledge * * * perhaps * * *"

Here the cooing of these turtle-doves was interrupted.

"The adagio is about to begin!" [Does the learned counsel allude, when he speaks of the "adagio," to the *andante con variazioni* of Beethoven's so-called Kreutzer Sonata,—A major, Opus 47? But did a lawyer ever count for anything outside of his briefs? Ch. Frobisher.*]

"The adagio be—" thought Charley, with a flash of heat; but reined himself back on that modest little verb; so that no man will ever know what he intended to think. [A thousand pities, too, for as his mind,

* Reading the final proofs of this book, I find, bracketed into the text, sundry satirical observations at my expense; signed, some by Charley, others by Alice, who had undertaken to relieve me of the drudgery of the first proofs. Rather than bother the printer, I have suffered many of them to remain—for what they are worth!—J. B. W. [And I suffer this astounding note to remain for what it is worth.—Ed.]

though originally sound, never had the advantage of legal training, 'tis a recreation that he treats it to but seldom. J. B. W.]

My grandfather has passed out of the parlor on tip-toe, to make this announcement; though why on tip-toe (there being an intermission in the music) I leave to psychologists to determine.

The two giggling girls had popped into seats near the door; and when they saw him moving past them, bent on his errand of mercy (Charley was not to miss the *adagio*), they fell upon each other's necks and wept sunny tears.

"Poor Mr. Frobisher!" gasped one.

"Isn't it too cruel!" gurgled the other.

Presently Mr. Whacker returned, looking rather disconcerted. Charley had said, "In a moment, Uncle Tom;" but his flushed face, and his voice, pitched in a strange key, as it were, rather upset his old friend; and he had retreated rather precipitately, a little troubled in mind (he knew not why), but none the wiser for what he had seen.

"Won't they come in to hear the *adagio*?" asked one of the gigglers. The little hypocrite had brought her features under control with an effort, and had even managed to throw into her voice an accent of sympathetic solicitude.

"Not even to hear the *adagio*!" echoed her pal, with reproachful emphasis.

"They seem to be engaged," said Uncle Tom, simply.

At this the gigglers giggled giggloariously.

"The simpletons!" sighed my grandfather, bending upon them a look wherein the glory of his dark eyes was veiled with a gentle pathos that ever dimmed them when he looked upon happiness and youth. "Laugh while you may! You will have plenty of time for tears in the journey of life, poor things. In this poor world, my daughters, the height of foolishness is often the summit of wisdom. Laugh on." And he placed his hands upon their sunny heads, as though to bless them and to avert the omen. And they, with one accord, arose, and, throwing around his neck a tangle

of shining arms, stood on tiptoe and kissed him. And he went his way, none the wiser,—went his way in that simplicity of age which is more touching than that of childhood; since it has known once—and forgotten. And between his departing form and their eyes, that laughed no longer, there arose a mist that seemed to lend a tender halo to his gray hairs—and they blessed him in turn.

“Mr. Frobisher,” said Alice, halting in front of the door, “I think we should go in.”

“Go in?” repeated Charley, with a rather dazed look.

Things were *so* interesting on the piazza!

“Yes, we *must*!”

Could he be mistaken? No, there was an unmistakable something in that pull upon his arm that said, *Come with me.*

“Not now; just one brief moment!”

“Yes, *now*. We might hurt Uncle Tom’s feelings.”

“*Well*!” Did she mean it? Charley gave a quick, inquiring glance. She raised her eyes and met his with a kind of shrinking frankness.

“You say,” said Charley, “that we must go in to hear the adagio; but—tell me—just one little word: while they are playing that, may my heart beat in the frolic rhythm of the scherzo?”

She made no reply, nor raised her head; but the same gentle pull upon his arm seemed to say,—and plainer than before,—*Come with me.*

“Tell me, dearest?”

“Oh, don’t bother people so!”

Then, for the first time, her face, pallid before, was suffused with a sudden glory of roses.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE reader can hardly be more amazed at the last chapter than is the writer,—amazed not so much at its contents as at its existence. I agree, at the close of the forty-fifth chapter, to exclude all save the loves of the Don from these pages, and then devote the whole of the forty-sixth to the amours of Charley and Alice! I break a promise almost in the act of making it. Some explanation seems proper, and one lies close at hand.

Your modern Genius is an out-and-out business man. He may be trusted to furnish his publisher just so many chapters, just so many pages, paragraphs, lines, words, as shall precisely fill the space allotted him in the magazine. Nor baker with his loaves, nor grocer with his herring, could be more exact. Pegasus no longer champs his bit, as of old, nor paws the earth. He goes in shafts, in these days, and is warranted not to kick in harness. He trots up to your front door, goods are delivered, and he jogs off to another customer, his flanks cool, no foam upon rein.

Now, I, being a mere Bushwhacker, bestride, of course, an untrained, shaggy mustang,—an animal sorely given to buck-jumping and to unaccountable bursts in every direction save along the beaten track. And how, pray, am I to know, astride such a disreputable prairie-Pegasus, whither I am going, and how far; and when, if ever, I may hope to return?

The average reader would probably accept this apology, but as I am (in a small way) a disciple of Epaminondas (who, as every school-boy knows, would not fib, even in jest), I shall not offer it in palliation of my conduct. The true explanation (and therefore the only one that that unique Grecian would have thought of giving) is to be found in the rather peculiar way in which this story is being written.

The romantic among my readers doubtless picture

me to themselves seated in my arm-chair, my feet encased in embroidered slippers, my graceful person (for they did not believe me when I admitted that I was fat) wrapped in the folds of a rich dressing-gown. My intellectual brow is half shaded by my long hair, half illumined by the pale light of the midnight lamp. Meantime, with upturned eyes I await inspiration.

This, though a pretty enough picture, is not such as would have earned the approval of the hero who first taught the Spartans how to yield; for, on the contrary, this tale, so far, has been put together in a very different fashion—and as follows:

Whenever Charley and Alice are accessible to me,—when, that is, either they are spending a few weeks in Richmond, or I can run down to Leicester for a little holiday,—it is understood that we three are to get together, alone, of course, and at such hours as we are least liable to interruption. The door is then locked (never double-locked,—to Alice's great regret,—for she says that this precaution is invariable in novels; but, for the life of us, none of the three could ever find out how to double-lock a door), and we begin talking over those old times, Alice and Charley doing most of it. For, as the reader may recall, either one or the other of them was an eye-witness of most of the scenes depicted in this volume. My part in the transactions is simple. From time to time I contribute some little incident which may have come within my personal knowledge; but, as a rule, I confine myself to taking notes; by the aid of which, I, in my leisure moments, draw up, between meetings, as clear a narrative as I can; and this being submitted to my coadjutors, is brought into its final shape by the combined efforts of the trio.

This method of composition explains, though I fear it will not excuse, what many readers will deem a grave defect in our joint production. Confined to what either Alice or Charley or myself saw or heard with our mere outward eyes or ears, there was obviously no place in these pages for any of that subtle analysis of thoughts, that deep insight into feelings, that far-reaching pene-

tration into the inmost recesses of the mind and heart, that marks *Modern Genius*.

But it is just on this point that Charley and I have had battle after battle with Alice. She will insist on Insight, on Analysis. People must be told, by the ream, what Mary felt, what the Don thought; and she cites novel after novel to fortify her position.

"Why do you bring up those books," said Charley, one day. "Are we writing a novel, pray? We are writing, as I understand it, a—by the way, Jack-Whack, what *are* we writing—for instance?"

"A symph—"

"Exactly so! We are composing a Symphonic Monograph,—precisely. Now show me, in the whole range of literature, one solitary instance of a writer of symph—ic—graphs—"

Charley was not stammering. He has of late years almost entirely freed himself from this infirmity. The verbal fragments above represented escaped from alternate corners of his mouth, Alice having dammed the main channel of utterance in the most extraordinary manner. [It was a way she had. During the composition of this entire work, whenever Charley has seemed on the point of saying something that she was pleased to consider humorous, she would fly at him in the most barefaced manner, shaking with laughter, and cut him off. Then Charley glances at me, and tries to frown: "Oh, it is nobody but Jack," says she.]

"Besides," went on Charley, without even wiping his lips, "you know perfectly well, Alice, that you always skip that stuff. Look me in the eyes," said he, seizing her firmly by the wrist,—*"look me in the eyes and deny it!"*

"Yes, but I am but a plain body, without pretensions; whereas people of ideas, of culture, you know—"

"Then you admit that where you come to pages, solid pages of Insight, you incontinently skip them for those passages where the characters are either acting or speaking? Is it not so, you little humbug?"

"But should we not always seek the praise of the judicious?"

"Oh, the simplicity of your soul, to imagine that we are making a book for the edification of the wise! As I understand it, Jack-Whack, it is composed exclusively for the delectation of—"

Alice held up her hand.

"Of the majority," added Charley. [Interruption, remonstrance, confusion. "Pshaw! who minds Jack?"]

"The fact is," resumed Charley, with traces of a hypocritical frown still lingering on his features,—
"the fact is, all that kind of stuff which you profess to admire, but confess you never read, reminds one of the annotations of the classics for schools. They are not intended to instruct the boys, but are written by one pedant to astound other pedants. By the way, Jack, a capital idea strikes me. It will give our book such a taking and original air. Suppose we go through it from beginning to end, and simply cut out all the *skipienda*,—every line of it,—and leave only what is intended to be read?"

"And then publish it in the kingdom of Liliput?" inquired Alice.

This, then, my reader, is the way we talk while we write this story; some account of which I thought might interest you; and it was after a discussion like that just recorded that we three agreed (by a strictly party vote of two to one) that our lovers must, for the rest of the book, be reduced to a single pair. We reached this decision at the conclusion of our labors on the forty-fifth chapter. We also settled it to our own satisfaction, that by the time our future readers had reached this stage in our story, they would probably be consumed with curiosity to know whether it was Lucy or Mary, that, with the Don, was to constitute that favored pair. The fact is, it had now begun to dawn upon us that (although *we* knew better) we had actually given the supposed reader some right to look upon our mysterious hero as an emissary from Utah. So putting our heads together, we decided that it was time that he showed his colors. With a view to forwarding this end, therefore, I requested Alice and Charley to give me some account of a certain inter-

view had between them, when the former had endeavored to discover from him which of the two girls had captured the Don. For Alice had often told me that she had made up her mind, on the night before that dinner at Oakhurst, to make an attack on the redoubtable Mr. Frobisher on that day, with this information in view. And she had formed this resolution owing to something that had occurred between Mary and herself.

It appears that on the night previous to this dinner, that reserve which Mary had shown Alice ever since the Don had crossed her path had suddenly given way. The two girls had gone to bed together, as was their wont. The Don's visits to Oakhurst had been growing in frequency, and it was understood that this dinner was given in his honor.

"What, aren't you asleep yet?" said Alice.

"No," said Mary. Something in her voice touched her friend.

"You must not lie awake in this way," said Alice. And she began to pass her fingers across Mary's forehead and through her hair.

It was a simple action, but Mary broke down under it. Throwing her arms around her life-long friend, she pressed her convulsively to her bosom, and hiding her face in her pillow, wept in silence. After a while they began to talk, and they talked all night, as I am told that sex and age not infrequently do. Alice arose next morning with a fixed determination to unravel the mystery that was giving her friend so much pain. Mr. Frobisher could make things plain, if he would. But would he? At any rate, she would try; for she was a plucky little soul. And so, when Charley had offered her his arm, that day, after dinner, for a promenade on the piazza, she felt that she had her opportunity. But it would appear that Charley had been looking for an opportunity himself; and so, the other day, when I asked this couple to let me have an account of the matter, with a view to the forty-sixth chapter of the Symphonic Monograph, it leaked out that Master Charles had, on this occasion, taken up

Alice's time not in telling her whom the Don loved, but whom Charles adored. This discovery, coming upon me so suddenly, upset my determination to exclude the loves of Charley and Alice from our story, and I called for an account of the courtship. For I felt assured that an authentic account of the first and only love-making of Charles The Silent would be the most delicious morsel in the whole Monograph. But at the merest allusion to such a thing, Alice blushed in the most becoming way; and when Charley, clearing his throat and putting on a bold look, made as though he were about to begin, her face became as scarlet; and rising from her seat she gave him the most dignified look that I have ever seen in those merry-glancing hazel eyes. Thereupon Charley and I laughed so heartily that Alice saw that she had been taken in by her husband's serious face. "I thought not!" said she, laughing in turn. But the idea of a chapter given to the amours of Charles The Silent and Alice The Merry had seized upon my mind with so strong a fascination that I could not shake it off; and, as soon as I reached my bachelor quarters that night, I seized my pen. My eyes were soon in a fine phrensy rolling, I presume; for in the forty-sixth, or *Galaxy* Chapter, as I call it, from the numerous stars with which it is bespangled, distinct traces of Genius may be detected by the practised eye (with my assistance).

What I mean is, that chapter was composed in the manner in which true Creative Genius is in the habit of composing, as I understand; made, that is, out of the whole cloth,—woven of strands of air. But even here, though mounted on a genuine (though borrowed) earth-spurning Pegasus, I have not swerved far from the line that the great Bœotian would have marked out for me. Charley's courtship was quite real. It was the words only that I have had to invent, left in the lurch as I was by my two collaborators. And I was going to add that, in all probability, Charley made use of not one of those I have put in his mouth, when I recalled a coincidence so singular that I feel that the reader is entitled to hear of it. When I read to my

coadjutors my version of their amours, their merriment was uproarious. Charley, I may mention, who only smiled when he was a bachelor, has, since his marriage, grown stout and taken to laughing. So far as he was concerned, my putting the word "abyss" in his mouth was the master-stroke of the whole chapter.

"Why," said he, choking with laughter, "I am sure I never made use of the word in my whole life!"

"Neither had you ever before in your life made love to a girl," I objected.

"Don't be too sure of that!" said Charley, with a knowing look.

"H'm!" put in Alice.

"What makes the thing so truly delicious," said Charley, "is the lachrymose and woe-begone figure you make me cut; whereas—"

"Ah?" said Alice, bridling up.

"Whereas a chirpier lover than—"

"Chirpy! oh!"

"Why, Jack-Whack, if she did not love me the very first time she ever saw me,—*love?*—if she did not dote upon—"

"Dote indeed! Very well! very well! He felt sure, did he? Now, Jack, I'll leave it to you. I'll tell you just what he said, and let you decide whether they were the words of a 'chirpy' lover. Chirpy, indeed! Mr. Frobisher, you are too absurd! We were walking up and down the piazza, and I had on my green and white silk dress,—plaid, you know; and he said—the first thing he said was—I remember it as well as if it had been yesterday—"

I drew forth my pencil. Here, after all, providentially as it were, we were to have an authentic version of the amours of the silent man and her of the merry-glancing hazel eyes.

"My dear," began Charley, with nervous haste, "we are interrupting Jack; let him go on with his reading"

"Aha!" cried Alice, in triumph, "I thought—"

Here Alice detected Charley giving me, with his off eye, a wink so huge that its corrugations (like waves bursting over a breakwater) scaled the barrier of his

nose and betrayed what the other side of his face was at.

Charley ducked his head just in time; and immediately thereafter began a series of dextrous manœuvres among the chairs and other furniture in the room, in evading Alice's persistent efforts to smooth out some of the wrinkles that wicked wink had wrought. At last he tumbled into his seat rather blown, and with one cheek redder than the other.

Amid such scenes as this has this tale been tacked together. Can the reader wonder at its harum-scarum way of getting itself told? Am I not driving a team of mustangs?

"They are all alike," puffed Charley; "they love us to distraction, but we must not know it. Go on, my boy."

I read on amid much hilarity; and it was such reception of this solitary effort of my individual muse that induced me to retain it in the body of the work. At last we came to the passage where occurred the coincidence to which I have alluded.

In my fabulous and starry account of the billing and cooing on the piazza, I make Charley ask, *May my heart beat in the frolic rhythm of the scherzo?* This—for why should I hide my harmless self-content from my friend, the reader?—this I don't deny that I thought a very neat and unhackneyed way of asking a girl whether she gave you leave to consider yourself a happy dog. It was my little climax, and—I confess it—my heart fluttered a little as I drew near the passage, in anticipation of the plaudits I trusted to receive.

No clapping of hands. A dead silence, rather; and looking up, I saw my friends staring at one another.

"What's the matter?" asked I, a little sheepishly. "I rather thought," I stammered, "that—that that was—not so bad?"

"Mr. Frobisher, I am astonished at you!" [At that period it was not usual for Virginia wives to call their husbands by their Christian names.]

"Indeed, my dear—"

"You need not say one word! I should not have thought it of you, that's all!"

"But, Alice—"

"Why, what's the matter?" asked I, bewildered.

"Oh, nothing!" said Alice, with a toss of her head.

"Jack-Whack, I'll tell you; she thinks I have been blabbing to you."

"Thinks!"

"But I have not!"

"Do you mean to tell me that Jack, without a hint from you—actually—" she hesitated.

"'Frolic rhythm of the scherzo!'" I shouted, in joyous derision; "and you positively used that phrase, you sentimental old fraud!"

Charley turned very red,—redder still, when Alice, relieved of the suspicion that he had been revealing their little love-mysteries, laughed merrily at his discomfiture.

"It was not quite so b-b-b-b-ad as that. I admit the 'scherzo' part; b-b-b-but 'frolic rhythm'! I was not so many kinds of an idiot as that amounts to."

And so—I swear it by the shades of Epaminondas—I had actually hit upon the very word,—and truth is again stranger than fiction.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

TIME was pressing. In another week these long-continued and long-to-be-remembered Christmas festivities would come to an end. Yesterday, Alice had failed to extract any information from Charley. To-day, she would make another effort.

Opportunities were not lacking,—abundant opportunities. Somehow, everything had changed. Yesterday, wherever Alice was, there was a cluster of merry faces. To-day, her mere appearance upon the piazza seemed to dissipate the groups that chanced to be sitting there. One by one, on one pretext or another, the young people would steal away; and it was astounding how often Charley constituted the sole social residuum. Charley

thought it famous luck; but Alice detected distinct traces of design in this sudden avoidance of her society. "They seem to be engaged,"—she knew that innocent phrase of Uncle Tom's was passing from mouth to mouth, and it annoyed her; for, at the period in question, it was fashionable for our Virginia girls to be ashamed of being engaged; and so deep-rooted was this feeling, that whereas we are assured by Cornelius Nepos that Epaminondas was such a lover of truth that he would not lie even in jest—but enough of the virtuous Theban—

Alice, then, being superior neither to her sex nor to her age, as I am glad to say, was half vexed at being so constantly left alone with Charley,—yet half willing to be so vexed. There was an innuendo, it is true, in the very absence of her companions; but then the soft rubbish that Charley was pouring into her pink ear!

Of all passions, love is the most selfish; not excepting hunger and thirst. Yesterday, Alice had been eager to speak with Charley, alone, in the interests of her friend Mary. To-day she has already had three talks with him; and although he had given her nothing more to do than to listen to the conjugation of one little verb, she had not thought of Mary once. Left together for the fourth time, they were sitting on the piazza; and Charley, having already exhausted and re-exhausted the other tenses, was about to tackle the pluperfect,—that is to say, having persuaded himself that it was true, he was beginning to explain to Alice how it was that, before he had ever seen her, and merely from what he had heard of her, etc., etc., etc. [Fib! *Alice F.*] Just at this juncture, Mary brushed past them. Charley raising his eyes and seeing in Mary's a casual, kindly smile, returned it with interest,—the happy dog! Alice raised hers, and seeing the casual, kindly smile,—and more,—looked grave.

"What is the matter?" asked Charley.

Compared with your infatuated lover, your hawk is the merest bat.

Alice rose. "I want to have a talk with you. Let us walk down to 'the Fateful.'"

"The Fateful"—"Fateful Argo," to give the name in full—had been christened by Billy. It was neither more nor less than a large and strongly-built row-boat, which had been hauled up on the shore; and being old and leaky, had been abandoned there. It had become imbedded in the sand, and being protected from the wind by a dense clump of low-growing bushes, was a very pleasant resting-place for the romantic, in sunny winter weather. It has been sung that Venus sprang from the waves. The truth of the legend I can neither deny nor affirm; but it is certain that their gentle splashing had a strange intoxication for many a couple that ventured to take their seats in this "Fateful Argo."

Alice took her seat in the stern, and Charley (although there were several other seats in good repair) sat beside her.

I think it will be allowed me that no book was ever freer than this from satirical reflections upon women (or, in fact, freer from reflections of every sort upon any and all subjects); but I am constrained to observe, just here, that it seems to me that they have, at times, a rather inconsequential way of talking. That is, you cannot always tell, from what they have just said, what is coming next.

"I have asked you," began Alice, "to come with me to this retired spot that I may have a talk with you. I have a favor to—Mr. Frobisher, you must be beside yourself! And the piazza full of people!" [Shades of Epaminondas! *A. Frobisher.*]

That's what I complain of. When they begin a sentence, you never know how it is going to end.

"On the contrary,—thank heaven!—I am beside you."

"But you won't be beside me long, if you don't behave yourself. Don't,—oh, *don't!* Are you *crazy?*"

"Perfectly,—and glad of it," replied Charley, with brazen resignation.

"Well, then." And with a supple grace disengaging herself from his proximity, so to speak, she whisked away to the seat in front.

That's the reason I always did love women. Their

memories are so short. No matter how angry they may be, if you will watch them while they are scolding you, you will see that they are forgiving you as fast as they can.

"You are perfectly outrageous!" said Alice; at the same time readjusting her collar,—and with both hands,—just to show how dreadfully provoked she was.

"Outrageous? Presently you will be calling me Argo-naughty," said Charley. [This is too bad! I never made one in my life. *Chs. F.*]

Alice had purposed looking indignant for two or three consecutive seconds, but surprised by this totally unexpected sally, she burst out laughing. She had opened her batteries on the enemy, but, by ceasing to fire, she had revealed the exhaustion of her ammunition; and he, so far from being stampeded, showed symptoms of an advance. As a prudent captain, all that was left her was to retire. She took the seat next the prow. The enemy seized the vacated position.

"That seat is very rickety."

"So I perceive," remarked the enemy, rising and advancing.

"Oh, but there is not room on this for two. Go back to the stern." And she threw out skirmishers.

The now exultant foe grasped one of the skirmishers in both his: "You will forgive me?"

"Oh, I suppose so, if you will go back to your seat, and behave yourself. Let go my hand."

"You have promised it to me."

"Yes, but indeed, Mr. Frobisher, the girls on the piazza—"

"The piazza is nearly a hundred yards away, bless its heart!"

"Indeed, indeed—*there* now!" she suddenly added, with a stamp of her foot, "I told you so!"

When? When did she tell him so? That's another reason I could never make a woman out.

It was then that Charley heard the sound of heavy footsteps crunching through the sand, and, turning his head, saw through the twilight an approaching figure almost at his elbow.

Alice, like most, though not all of her sex, was, as I have mentioned before, a woman. Raising her placid face and serene eyes, she pointed out to her companion, with the tip of her parasol, a gull that hurried above them in zigzag, onward flight. "Yes," continued she, —or seemed to continue,—"she seems to be belated. I wonder where she will roost to-night? On some distant island, I suppose."

"Sam, is that you? Sam is one of my men,—one of the best on my farm. Sam, this is Miss Alice—Miss Alice Carter."

"Sarvant, mistiss," said Samuel, hastily removing his hat and bowing, not without a certain rugged grace; while at the same time, by a backward obeisance of his vast foot, he sent rolling riverward a peck of shining sand.

"Well, Sam, any news from the farm?"

"Lor', mahrster, d'yar never is no news over d'yar! I most inginerally comes over to Elminton when a-sarchin' for de news."

"And you want to make me believe that you walk over here every night for the news, do you? Sam is courting one of Uncle Tom's women," added Charley, addressing Alice. "I am in daily expectation of having him ask my consent to his nuptials."

Sam threw back his head and gave one of those serene, melodious laughs (as though a French horn chuckled), the like of which, as I have said before, will probably never again be heard on this earth. "Lor' bless me, young mistiss, what's gone and put dat notion 'bout my courtin' in Marse Charley head? I always tells 'em as how a nigger k'yahnt do no better'n walk in de steps o' de mahrster, and Marse Charley and me is nigh onto one age; and Marse Charley ain't married, leastwise not yet."

"You mean to say," said Alice, "that when Mr. Frobisher marries it will be time enough for you to think of taking a wife?"

"Adzackly, young mistiss, adzackly, dat's it. But Lor' me, I dunno, neither. I ain't so sartin 'bout dat. Sam don't want to be hurried up. He want to take he

time a-choosin'. A man got to watch hisself dese times. D'yar ain't no sich gals as d'yar used to be. De fact is, ole Fidjinny has been picked over pretty close, and Sam ain't after de rubbage dat de others done leff."

"I am afraid you are rather hard to please, Sam?"

"Yes, mistiss, Sam *is* hard to please." [Three weeks from this date Sam led to the altar a widow with one eye and eleven children,—making an even dozen,—who was lame of the left leg, black as the ace of spades, and old enough to be his mother.] "I won't 'spute dat. Ain't I patternin' after Marse Charley? Slow and sho' is de game Marse Charley play, and Sam's a-treadin' in he tracks. Lor', mistiss, you wouldn't believe how many beautiful young ladies has been a-fishin' for him; but pshaw! dey mought as well 'a' tried to land a porpoise wid a pin-hook!"

Encouraged by the smiles evoked by this bold comparison, Sam bloomed into metaphor:

"But he was not to be cotched, not he! Leastwise not by dem baits. 'Never mind, Marse Charley,' says I to myself, 'never you mind. You g'long! Jess g'long a-splashin' and a-cavortin' and a-sniffin'!' 'Fore Gaud dem's my very words, 'but d'yar's a hook somewhere as will bring you to sho' yet,' says I; 'and dat hook is baited wid de loveliest little minner,'—umgh—u-m-g-h! Heish! Don't talk!"

Charley could scarcely suppress his delight. "And how soon," said he, carelessly dropping his hand into his pocket,—“how soon am I to be landed?"

"How soon?" repeated Sam, leaning upon his heavy staff and reflecting with a diplomatic air. "How soon? Lor', mahrster, what for you ax a nigger dat question? How is a nigger to know? But I do believe," said he, turning his back upon the river, and at the same time landing his metaphor, "dat you have done jumped over into de clover-field already, and you ain't gwine to jump back no mo'." (Here Charley withdrew his hand from his pocket and threw his arm casually behind him, across the gunwale of the *Argo*.) "Leastwise," he added with a perceptible-imperceptible

glance at Alice,—“leastwise I don’t see how you could have de heart to do it.”

Here Charley gave a slight movement of his wrist, invisible to Alice; and Sam, with a few sidelong, careless steps, placed himself behind his master. He stooped and rose again, and Alice saw in his hand three or four oyster shells. These he dropped from time to time, pouring forth, meanwhile, a wealth of tropes and figures drawn from both land and sea; but the last shell seemed to fall into his pocket.

An Anglo-Saxon, if he have a well-born father, a careful mother, and half a dozen anxious maiden aunts, you shall sometimes see hammered into the similitude of a gentleman; but in your old Virginia negro good-breeding would seem to have been innate.

“Some says dat d’yar is as good fish in de sea as ever was cotched out of it; but I tells ’em, when you done pulled in one to suit you, you better row for de sho’ less a squall come and upsot de boat. Well, good-evenin’, Miss Alice, and good-evenin’, Marse Charley!” And with polite left foot and courteous right the black ploughman sent rolling the shining sand.

“There, now,” said Alice, “you see! What did I tell you?”

“Oh,” replied Charley, “Sam will keep dark!”

Yes, those were his very words! And Alice acknowledges that he made the one recorded above (though I see he has denied it). Such is ever the ruin wrought by love, even in the mind of a philosopher.

“By the way,” said Alice, as she stood with her feet upon the gunwale of the Argo, ready to spring, “in the rather mixed metaphors of honest Sam, which of us was the fish and which the hook? ‘Porpoise,’” quoted she, laughing, “I trust I don’t remind you of one?”

Charley, who stood in the sand, held one of Alice’s hands in each of his with a degree of pressure entirely incommensurate with the necessities of equilibrium:
 “* * * * *” sang he, with a rapt and
 fatuous smile. “* * * * *
 Absence of wings * * * vision * *

* * eyes beheld." For, upon my word, the reader must not expect me to transcribe more than a word, here and there, of such jargon.

Yet, though my tongue be harsh, I do not in my heart blame Charley; for Alice, at all times a pretty girl, was, just at this moment, as she stood above him with the dark sky for a background, radiantly beautiful in his eyes. And more,—

She looked beautiful on purpose.

I repeat it,—she did it on purpose.

And here, though it is abhorrent to all my art-instincts to break the current of my story with anything like a thought, original or selected,—though I have promised the reader to place before him a succession of pictures merely, without even adding, *This is Daniel*, and, *These are the Lions!*—I feel that I have used an expression requiring an explanation. That explanation I cannot give save through the medium of what—disguise it how I will—wears the semblance of a thought.

Buckle, in his "History of Civilization in England," lays it down that no man can write history without a knowledge of the physical sciences. Now it is equally true that no one can discuss human nature scientifically without an acquaintance with zoology. It is Darwin and the naturalists who have opened up this new field of inquiry; and Comparative Zoological Nature has now become as needful a study to the playwright and novelist as Comparative Anatomy is to the physiologist. For my own part, whenever I would know whether a certain proposition be true of man, I first inquire if it holds good as to the lower animals,—to speak as a man; and in the course of my desultory investigations on this line I have stumbled upon sundry valuable truths.

Among the convictions which I have reached in this way is the one which led me to say just now that our pretty little Alice, perched upon the gunwale of the Argo, bethought her of making poor Charley crazy with love, by simply looking very, very beautiful; and did so look accordingly, then and there. Of

the mere *fact* there can be no doubt, since I have Charley's word for that. [Fact. C. F.] [Goose! A. F.] [Who? J. B. W.] But a scientific explanation of the phenomenon can be given only by a student of Comparative Zoological Nature.

The way in which I hit upon the truth in question was as follows. A vexatious incident in my own private history had occurred just at the time when I had set myself the task of weaving this Monograph, and I was ruefully ruminating upon woman and her ways, and bringing up in my mind, and contrasting with her (in my Comparative Zoological fashion) all manner of birds and fishes and what not, when all of a sudden there popped into my head eels, and how marvellously slippery they were.

But, thought I, if you can but get your finger and thumb into their gills, you've got 'em; and if eels—

But straightway I lost heart; for I remembered, from my Darwin, that of gills—or *branchiæ*, as he will persist in calling them—no traces have for ages been discovered in the *genus homo*,—at least in the adult stage. Far from it; for the Egyptian mummies, even in their day, for example, got on perfectly without them.

The case was hopeless, therefore; but still I went on ruminating about women and eels and eels and women, in the most aimless and unprofitable fashion, till, wandering off from the eel of commerce and the pie, I chanced to think of the electric variety of that fish. Here faint streaks of dawn began to make themselves felt; and so, making a rapid excursion through the animal kingdom, and recalling the numberless appliances for offence, defence, and attraction to be observed therein, I returned flushed with victory. I had made a discovery. It is this. Just as the eel in question (the *Gymnotus electricus*) has a reservoir of electricity, to be used when needed, so woman, I find, carries about her person more or less bottled beauty, which she has the singular power of raying forth at will.

More or less; in too many cases, less; but evolution, through selection, may ultimately mend that.

How, or by what mechanism they contrive to do this, is more than I can tell. We know, it is true, that the *Anolis principalis* (the so-called chameleon of the Gulf States) can change at will from dingy brown to a lovely pea-green, by reversing certain minute scales along its back; but to jump from this fact to the conclusion that the woman you saw at breakfast old and yellow, but youthful and rosy at the ball, indued all this glory by simply reversing her scales, is, in the present state of our knowledge, premature. Besides, we have just seen that the gills of the prehistoric sister have long since disappeared; so that the woman of the period may, upon investigation, turn out not to have any scales, minute or other, to reverse; so unsafe are analogies in matters of science.

But the fact remains (no other hypothesis covering all the observed phenomena) that women carry about their persons bottled beauty.

As to the thing itself, female beauty, I do not pretend to know any more about it than other people. That it is in its nature a poison has been notorious for thousands of years, attacking the male brain with incredible virulence. This pathological condition of that organ has been spoken of for ages as Love, as everybody knows. But what everybody does not know, is that woman possesses the power of *concentrating* this toxic exhalation upon a doomed male,—dazzling him with what I may provisionally term beauty's bull's-eye lamp. Love is *not* blind. Just the reverse. The lovelorn see what is invisible to others, that is all; the focussed rays of the most magical of all magic lanterns.

Before I made this discovery, I was continually wondering how most of the women I knew had managed to get married; but it is a great comfort to me now to know that they are all beautiful (in the eyes of their husbands).

Setting in motion, then, this subtle mechanism, which all women possess (though in some it don't seem to work), Alice showered down upon Charley, from hazel eyes and sunny hair, from well-turned throat and dimpled hand, from undulating virgin form and momentary

ankle-flash,—showered down upon him as she stood there graceful as a gazelle ready to spring, a sparkling wealth of youth and beauty.

No matter what Charley said.

"I am glad you think so," said she, fluttering down from her perch.

The shining sand was deep; and that's the reason they walked so slowly; and that's the reason Alice clung so closely to his arm; and that's the reason Charley thought he was walking on rosy morning clouds.

"Oh!" cried Alice,—and Charley's face was corrugated with sudden care: had some envious shell dared bruise her alabaster toe?

"Did you hurt your foot, — — —est?"

"Oh, no; I just remembered that I had forgotten the very thing that I came to the Argo to talk over with you."

"What was that?"

Alice looked perplexed.

"Tell me, — —ing; what is it?"

"I don't know where to begin."

"At the b-b-b-beginning, of course."

"With some people I should; but do you know that you are a very queer creature?"

"Your fault; I was just like other people till I met you,—a little cracked ever since."

"Oh, I like you that way." And she gave his arm a little involuntary squeeze. [Nothing of the kind. *Al.*]

"How am I queer, then?"

"Well, you never tell people anything."

"I have told you a good many things within the last day or two."

"Only one thing, but that a good many times. But I am not a bit tired of hearing it."

Here Charley gave her hand a voluntary little squeeze against his heart. [Inadequate statement of an actual occurrence. *C. F.*]

"The fact is, I want to ask you a question, and am actually afraid you won't answer it. There, I knew you would not! A cloud passed over your face at the

very word question. You are so strange about some things!"

"Let's hear the question; what is it about?"

"About the Don. There! Why, you are positively frowning!"

"Frowning!"

"Yes; your face hardened as soon as I uttered the word Don."

"The Don! What am I supposed to know about him? Have not you known him as long as I, and longer?"

"Oh, I am not going to ask you who he is, or anything of that kind. I presume he alone knows that." (Charley's face grew serene.) "It is something entirely different. Is the Don—I know you will think it idle curiosity, but, indeed, indeed, it is not—is the Don—in love?"

"Is the Don in love?" cried Charley, with a sudden peal of laughter. "Is the Don in love? And that is the weighty question that you have made such a pother about! Is the Don in love!"

"That sounds more like my question than an answer to it."

"Now, seriously, my —ous —ing, you did not expect me to answer such a question as that?"

"No, I *didn't*!" (A little snappishly.) "Any other man—under the circumstances—"

"Yes, I believe I am very different from other men, and it is well; for if every man were of my way of thinking, every girl in the world, save one, would be deserted; and soon there would be but one man left on earth,—such a Kilkenny fight would rage around that one girl!"

"I knew you would not answer my question." (Not snappishly.)

"How am I to know anything about it?"

"You and he are inseparable—"

"And hence he has made a confidant of me, and I am to betray him? No, he has never alluded to any such matter. Upon my word, I know nothing whatever upon the subject."

"Indeed? You are a droll couple, to be sure," and she looked up, admiringly, at one-half of the couple, "talking together for hours, and never telling one another anything! Well, then, I shall answer the question myself: The Don is in love: there!"

"What extraordinary creatures women are, to be sure! You ask a question, are vexed at getting no answer, and then answer it yourself! The Don is in love, then; but with whom?"

"That I don't know; I only suspect. Oh, yes, I more than suspect; in fact, I *know*, but some of the girls don't agree with me, and I want to know which side you are on."

"On yours, of course—"

"No joking; I am in earnest. The question between us girls is this: it is plain to us all that he is in love—"

"Then, why on earth—"

"Don't you know that when you wish to find out about one thing the best way is to ask about another?"

"That aphorism, I must confess, is entirely new to me."

"Well, it is a household word with women. *Of course* he is in love; we—all of us girls, I mean—know *that*. But with whom? That is the question which divides us."

"And you wish to put that conundrum to me? Indeed, I know nothing about it."

"Nor suspect?"

Charley hesitated.

"Honor bright? Oh, don't be so hateful!"

Charley smiled; Alice saw he was weakening.

"Oh, *do* tell me, which of the two?"

"Which of the *two*?" repeated Charley, looking puzzled. "Surely, you cannot be in earnest; for of all the men I know, Dory—the D-D-D Don" [What, Charley, stammering on a mere *linguo-palatal*!] "is the least likely to have two loves."

"Dody, Dody! Why do you call him Dody?"

"I called him the Don," said Charley, doggedly.

"And Dody, too! Why Dody? What a droll nickname!" And she laughed.

"You are mistaken; I did not call him Dody."

"You didn't?"

"No; but my tongue," said Charley, coloring, "is like a mustang,—buck-jumps occasionally, and unseats its rider—*her* rider."

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" said Alice, with tender earnestness, and gave his arm—this time consciously—an affectionate, apologetic squeeze. [I don't deny it! *Al Frob.*]

"So the Don is not only a lover, but a double-barrelled one?"

"No, we don't think that," said Alice, laughing; "but there is a dispute among us which of two birds he wishes to bring down."

"Which of two birds? Really, you puzzle me," said Charley, reflecting. "I could guess the name of one, perhaps; but the other—I am completely at sea." And he looked up in inquiry.

"Is it possible! How blind, blind, blind you men are! And yet they tell me that nothing ever escapes your lynx eyes! Why, Lucy and Mary, of course."

"Lucy and Mary!" cried Charley, and, throwing back his head, he exploded with a shout of single-barrelled amazement.

"Wit and humor!" "Repeat, repeat, Alice!" cried voices from the piazza.

The strollers looked up in surprise at finding themselves so near the porch, while the occupants of this favorite lounging-place were in no less wonder at hearing Frobisher giving forth so unusual a sound. Alice swept the faces of her friends with a bright smile of greeting, but there was a certain preoccupation in her look. Charley's laugh had startled her. "Unconscious wit, then;" and turning, she looked up into her companion's face with a puzzled air.

It would seem that that sudden and unusual draft upon Charley's cachinnatory apparatus had exhausted that mechanism, for he was not even smiling now, but in what is called a brown study. He slowly turned on

his heel as though to return to the Argo, or, rather, as if he had no intentions of any kind, his movements being directed by what Dr. Carpenter calls unconscious cerebration. Alice, holding her companion's arm, turned upon him as a pivot (though with conscious cerebration, for she could almost feel upon the back of her head the smiles raying forth from the porch).

"Mary and Lucy, did you say?" inquired he, turning quickly upon her as though it had suddenly flashed upon him that he had not, perhaps, heard aright.

"Yes, Mr. Frobisher. What on earth is the matter?"

"What's the matter? Why, nothing, of course. You simply amused me, that is all." And smiling stiffly, he threw up his head with a sort of shake and made as though he would join the party on the porch.

This time Alice did not rotate on the pivot, but, standing firm, became the centre of revolution herself, and brought Charley to a "front face" again, by a sturdy pull upon his arm, and began to move slowly forward, as though to return to the Argo. "What is it?" asked she, looking up into his face with eager interest. "*Do tell me?*"

"Tell you what?"

"Why you act so strangely? Which of the two, then?"

These words threw Charley into his brown study again. Looking far away, with drawn lids, he was silent for some time. "Alice," said he, turning slowly and looking into her eyes, "I am going to surprise you."

"Neither Mary nor Lucy, you are going to say!" And her snowy bosom beat with thick-thronging breaths. "O-o-oh, I know," cried she, with a look of pain. "*He is married already!*"

Yet why with a look of pain? Ought she not rather on her friend's account to have rejoiced? But here was a hero evaporated; and in this humdrum treadmill of our life there is so little of romance! And do we not all of us, men and children alike, strain our eyes against the darkened sky, regretful that the flashing but all too evanescent meteor has passed away into the abyss of night?

Charley smiled. "How fearfully and wonderfully is woman made! You first ask me for information which I do not possess, but which it appears you do, then answer your own question; then when I am about to say something, you tell me what I am about to say; and then—with a little shriek—discover the mare's nest I am about to reveal! No, I was not going to say 'neither Lucy nor Mary,' nor yet that the Don was married. I was about to make a proposition to you. Are you really *very* anxious to have it decided whether it is Mary or Lucy?"

"Very."

"Then I know but one way: ask the Don himself."

"The idea!" cried Alice, with a cheery laugh.

"What!" added she, looking up into his face with great surprise, "surely you are not in earnest!"

"I am."

"Mr. Frobisher!"

"I am. I said I was going to surprise you."

Alice wheeled in front of him, and they stood looking into each other's eyes. "Upon—my—word," said she, slowly, "I believe you really mean it!"

"I do."

"Mr. Frobisher! Then, if it be so important to you to know, why don't you ask him yourself?"

"It is of no earthly importance to me to know; it is of importance to—to—to—him to be asked?"

"You awful sphinx! You will kill me with curiosity! But why not ask him yourself? Why put it on me?"

"Because," said Charley, smiling,—“simply because it is your question; you want the answer to the riddle, not I!”

"That's just the way with you men," said Alice, smiling; "you affect to be lofty beings, superior to the foible, curiosity. And so you would make a cat's paw of me?"

"Well, yes; for it is you who want the chestnuts."

"And my fingers, therefore, are to be burnt; for this same Mr. Don is an awful somebody to approach."

"To others, perhaps, but not to you; nor to me, either, perhaps; but the chestnuts are for you. Be-

sides, as Dido said to her sister Anna, you know the approaches of the man and the happy moment. How often have I seen every one quaking with awe when you are attacking him with your saucy drolleries, and how charmed he always is, and how he laughs!"

"And poor dear mamma," said Alice, with a tender smile, "how she shakes and weeps and weeps and shakes! Do you know, Mr. Frobisher, though I say it 'as shouldn't,' I am not, by half, so giddy and brainless as I seem? Do you know why I cut up so many didoes? (By the way, I wonder whether that rather colloquial phrase has any reference to Æneas's girl?) But it is the truth, that half the time that I am cutting my nonsensical capers, it is just to make mamma laugh. Ah, Mr. Frobisher, you have hardly known what a mother can be, and you will have to love mine! You won't be able to help it." And the cutter of capers and of didoes passed her hand across her eyes. "Look," said she after a pause, "there she sits now, and beside the Don, too. Don't she look serene? See how she is smiling at me over the banister!" And throwing herself into an attitude, she blew kiss after kiss to Her Serenity, in rapid succession, from alternate hands. "There! she is off. As her eyes are shut tight, she will not be able to see me for half a minute, and I will take the opportunity of telling you, for your comfort, that she does not think there is a man living half good enough for me. How do you feel?"

"I feel that she is right."

"And I feel that she is twice wrong. First, because she does not know me, and secondly, because she does not know—*somebody!*" And skipping up the steps, she ran to her mother and bounced into her lap: "Are you glad to see me? Did you think I was never coming back?"

"A bad penny is sure—"

"Who's a bad penny?" And taking the plump cheeks between her palms, she squeezed the serene features into all manner of grotesque and rapidly-changing shapes. "Who's a bad penny? Isn't she a beauty?" said she, twisting the now unresisting head

so as to give the Don a full view of the streaming eyes and ludicrously projecting lips. "Behold those æsthetic lines! Ladies and gentlemen," said she, turning, with a quick movement, her mother's face in the opposite direction, "I call your attention to the Cupid's bow so plainly discernible in the curves of that upper lip. Can you wonder that papa is a slave? By the way," continued she in the same breath, and taking no heed of the general hilarity that she had aroused,—“by the way, Mr. Don, are *you* glad to see me?” But without waiting for him to find words to reply, a quizzical look came into her face as she observed that with the beat of her mother's laughter her own person was gently bobbing up and down, as though she rode a pacing horse: "Snow-bird on de ash-bank, snow-bird on de ash-bank, snow-bird on de ash-bank," she began, in a sort of Runic rhythm, or shall we say in jig measure? "snow-bird on de ash-bank;" and from her curving wrists, drawn close together in front of her bosom, her limp hands swung and tossed, keeping time, jingling like muffled bells. The pacing horse now broke into a canter, and the canter became a gallop: "Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross, ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross! This steed is about to run away; discretion is the better part." And springing from her mother's lap, she stood before the Don.

"Have you prepared your answer yet? Are *you* glad to see me once more?"

The Don put his hand upon his heart. Alice extended hers. The Don took it.

"You have not answered my question."

"Words cannot ex—"

"Words? Who is talking about words?" And she extended her hand again. "Press that lily fair,—just one little squeeze. She—the rotund smiler—won't be able to see for half a minute yet. Quick! She is wiping her eyes! Ah! ah! ah! Really and truly? Enough! Desist! We are observed!"

"She is the girl to tackle him!" thought Charley, wiping *his* eyes.

CHAPTER XLIX.

CHARLEY was right. She was the girl to tackle him, if he was to be tackled at all; but Charley knew that better than the reader, who has had merely a glimpse or so of the irrepressible Alice in her relations with the subject of this Monograph. For Charley had, as mentioned in the last chapter, witnessed innumerable scenes between the two, which had caused him to wipe his eyes and look as though something hurt him; that being his way of laughing before he was married. This being a Monograph, however, I have not felt at liberty to place those scenes before the reader; for a Monograph is, if I understand the term, a paper rigidly confined to one subject; alien topics being admitted only as illustrations throwing light on the main theme. So that the monotony of this narrative, which a hasty reader might attribute to poverty of invention, is in fact due to my rigidly artistic adherence to the Unities. A Monograph I promised, and a Monograph this shall be.

And the theme is *not* Love.

"Then why did you not say so at first?" I hear you ask, my Ah Yung Whack,—hear you say this in plain English, for in your day all other languages will be as dead as that of Cicero.

I cannot blame you for asking the question, though the answer is ready.

Because I should else have found no readers among my contemporaries. The readers—that is, the people of leisure—of my day are mostly women and preachers (the third sex* usually having all they can do to take care of the other two), and neither will bite freely at any bait save Love. They will nibble at the hook, but a game rush—bait, hook, and all, at a gulp—that is elicited only by a novel. Love is the bait now. Three hundred years ago it was Hate, the *ODIUM THEOLOGICUM*. Three hundred years hence it will be—

* A plagiarism on Rev. Sydney Smith—unconscious, let us hope.—*Ed.*

out I cannot guess what, and you will *know*, my almond-eyed boy,—almond-eyed and yellow of skin, though swearing by Shakespeare, and perhaps by Magna Charta and Habeas Corpus.

If, indeed, in your day—but enough! and so fare thee well, Confucian of far Cathay!

The piazza after breakfast, next morning. A bright, sunny day in the beginning of February, with a voluptuousness in the air hinting at the approach of spring. “How beautiful and sparkling the river looks!” said one of the girls. “And just to think,” she added, with a little stamp of her little foot, “we must bid farewell to it so soon!”

“That reminds me,” said Alice, rising briskly from the rocking-chair, in which she reclined, drinking in the balmy air and bright talk in half-dozing silence. But the silence and half-closed eyes were those of pussy awaiting the appearance of Mistress Mouse.

“That reminds me.” And giving a quick glance at Charley, as she passed him, she marched with a rapid, business-like tread, straight up to the Don. Charley prepared to weep. I must mention, in passing, that his way of weeping over Alice differed from her mother’s in this, that when the tears stood in his eyes, those windows of the soul were wide open, thereby revealing the fact that his ribs ached; whereas Mrs. Carter’s being shut tight, it was left entirely to conjecture whether she wept from pain or pleasure.

Alice planted her little self square in front of the towering figure of the Don, and looked him in the eyes as though expecting him to begin the conversation.

“What now, sauce-box?” asked Mrs. Carter, quickly, as though she felt that if she delayed a moment longer she would become, as usual, speechless; and a premonitory shake or two passing through her jolly figure showed that her prudence was not ill-judged. “What are you up to now?”

“Well?” said Alice, with her eyes fixed on those of the Don.

Charley dried his with his handkerchief, for he wanted to see everything. The Don (I regret to have to use

the expression) was in a broad grin. As to Mrs. Carter, the faintest thread of hazel was still visible between the lids of her fast-closing orbs of light. Alice turned pettishly on her heel, and with her eyes retorted over her shoulder, twirled her thumbs.

It was evident that there was something amiss about Charley's ribs. Not so with Mrs. Carter; for to any one surveying her person, ribs remained the merest hypothesis, based upon the analogy of other vertebrates; but the upper part of her spinal column gave way; that is, she lost control of her neck, and her head rested helplessly against the back of her chair.

"Well?"

"What an ornament is lost to the stage!" laughed the Don.

"The stage! Are we not enacting a real life-drama? and" (looking down) "to me a very serious one? And I have been looking for the *denouement* so long—so long!"

"That only comes at the end of the play!"

"And did you not hear what Jennie said just now? Another short week only is left! The end of the play has come. There is but time to come before the foot-lights and say our last say!" She paused. "Hast thou naught to say to me?" resumed she, with averted eyes, and in a stage-whisper.

"Naught to say to thee?" replied he, falling into her vein. "Can'st believe thy slave so flinty-hearted?"

"Forbid the thought!" cried she, in melodramatic tone and gesture. "No; long have I felt that thou had'st some sweet whisper for me o'er-hungry ear, but thy bashful reticence—I deny it not—did breed in me girlish heart a most rantankerous doubt. Speak! Remove this doubt rantankerous! But st! One approaches! Let's seek some secluded nook! Beholdest yon fateful Argo? On!" And passing her arm through his, she advanced down the piazza with the tread and look of an operatic gipsy-queen full of mezzo-soprano mystery, which she is to unveil before the foot-lights; while he, to the delight and amazement of the spectators, strode forward in the well-known wide, yet cautious

tread of the approaching bandit; to which nothing was lacking save the muffling cloak and the *pizzicato* on the double-basses.

Reaching the steps. "On!" cried she, flashing forth an arm. "Descend!"

"Encore! Encore!" shouted the audience, to which she deigned no reply, and the pair stepped upon the turf.

"Have you ever heard the 'Daughter of the Regiment'?" asked she, halting and speaking in her natural manner. "But of course you have. Strange to relate, I have myself heard it twice. You remember the Rataplan duet? Of course. Well, I am what's-her-name, and you are the old sergeant! Come!" And with that she strutted gayly off, rattling an imaginary drum with rare vivacity.

Again the Don was not to be outdone; rubadubbing, to the surprise of all, in a deep sonorous voice; strutting, who but he, and every inch a soldier.

Vociferous applause! The actors turned and bowed low.

"Unprecedented enthusiasm!" (whispered Alice) "the Gallery has tumbled into the Pit!"

Which was true; for the audience had rushed pell-mell upon the lawn, Mrs. Carter alone remaining upon the porch, unable, for the present, to rise, her chubby hands darting in every direction in vain search for her handkerchief.

For the moment the household service at Elmington was disorganized, and grinning heads protruded from the chamber windows. Let them grin on! In those days there was time for play, as well as for work.

"Umgh—umgh, heish!" ejaculated Uncle Dick, from his pantry window. "Miss Alice are a oner, I tell you!"

What our august butler meant by "hush!" I cannot say, as Zip had uttered no word. Perhaps he was shutting up some imaginary person, conceived as about to deny the proposition that Miss Alice was a "oner."

"Hein?" (pronounce as though French), said Zip, walling up his eyes.

"Wash dem dishes, boy! Do you 'spose I was gwine for to 'dress no remarks to de likes of you 'bout a young mistiss? Mind you business, and stop gapin' through de window!"

Moses made a show of obedience, rattling the plates together with unusual vigor; but for all that he craned his neck for a view of the lawn, keeping a weather eye out, the while, upon the ready right hand of his chief,—a man of summary methods with his subordinates.

"Come," said Alice, "a repeat is demanded." And away they went, rubadubbing back towards the piazza. "Rataplan! Rataplan! Rataplan!"

This time (on the antistrophe) Alice outdid herself. Tossing her head from side to side, with an inimitable mixture of reckless coquetry and military precision; her jaunty little figure stiffened and thrown back; tapping the ground with emphatic foot-falls, she was, in all save costume, an ideal vivandière. She glanced at Charley as she approached him.

"Rataplan! Rataplan! Rataplan!" thundered the Don.

"Rataplan! Rataplan! Rataplan!" chirped Alice.

In obedience to the glance he had received, Charley leaned forward; and just as she passed him a saucy toss of her head brought her lips within an inch or so of his attentive ear. "Rataplan! *I've a plan*, rataplan, plan, plan, plan;" and the couple reaching the steps, the Don bowed in acknowledgment of the joyous applause of the Pit; while Alice, her hand resting lightly in his, after the manner of prime donne, executed a series of the most elaborate courtesies ever witnessed on or off any stage.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen, hasten to the side-show! Within this tent," said she, waving her hand towards the porch, "sits enthroned the Fat Woman, better known as The Great American Undulator. Only twenty-five cents, children a quarter of a dollar! A strictly moral show, and all for the benefit of the church! Unlike the fiendish hyena, her mocking laughter never curdles the blood of the living, while

she ravens among the bones of the dead. *Twenty-five cents!* Warranted not to laugh aloud in any climate; but has been known to smile in the face of the fabled hyena aforesaid, well knowing that she has no bones, herself, for his midnight mockery. *Children, a quarter of a dollar!* Walk in, gentlemen, and take your sweet-hearts with you, and see The Unrivalled Anatomical Paradox, or The Boneless Vertebrate; known throughout this broad land as The Great American Undulator. A strictly moral show, only twenty-five cents, and all for the benefit of the church! Children—but I detain the primo basso,” said she, bowing gravely to that gentleman, as she passed her arm within his. “We will now hie us to the Fateful; since you insist on asking me, at that spot only, ‘what are the wild waves saying?’ or is it some other question, perhaps?—be still, my heart!”

The Don was never so happy as when Alice was girding at him in one of her frolic moods, and he sallied forth in high good humor. The audience watched from the piazza for some new mad prank on Alice’s part, but she walked slowly forward, and even seemed to be talking about the weather. At any rate, she raised her hand towards certain flying clouds.

“The saucy jade!” said Mrs. Carter, with ill-concealed admiration. “Well, I suppose she is a privileged character, as the saying is.”

“I should like to know, Mrs. Carter, how we are to get on without her?” said Mr. Whacker. “If I were thirty or forty years younger—but there is Charley; eh, Mr. Mum?”

“If,” replied Mr. Mum, “I were such as you were thirty or forty years ago, Uncle Tom, I don’t think she could possibly escape.”

“And what would become of me, then?” said Mrs. Carter. “How far are they going? I believe she is actually going to take him to the Argo, as they call it. There they go, straight on; he is helping her into the boat now; well, upon my word! What is she up to? This bright sun will tan her dreadfully, of course, but little she cares! She might raise her parasol, at least,

instead of poking holes in the sand, as she seems to be doing."

"Frightened? Yes, dreadfully," said Alice, giving her collaborators an account of the interview. "Of course I was; but I was 'intermined,' as poor old Uncle Dick used to say, to go through with it. You see, my liege-lord that was to be—Mr. Chatterbox, I mean," tapping Charley with her fan—"had, the evening before, commanded—"

"Commanded! Oh!" said Charley, darting his forefinger as an exclamation-point into the middle of a smoke-ring.

"Yes, commanded me to do it. I see, Jack, that you have left out that part of our talk (to make room for more of your own nonsense, I suppose) in your account of our conversation; but just as I was about to run up the steps, he stopped me and whispered, '*Mind, I wish it!*'"

"Oho!" cried Charley, brushing away with a sweep of his hand a wreath that would not work, "that's the way I talked then, was it?"

"Yes, that was what you said, and I—rather—liked it."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Charley, his left eye shut, and slowly moving his head, so as to keep the open centre of a whirling smoke-wreath between his right eye and a certain portrait on the wall.

"You know, Jack, every real woman likes the man to be master."

"Hear, hear!" gurgled Charley, in a rather choking voice; for by this time, in his effort to keep his eye on a fly on the ceiling (the ring having floated away from the picture and over his head), he had leaned his head so far back that (to speak rather as a Bushwhacker than as an anatomist) his Adam's apple was impinging on his vocal cords.

Alice glanced from Charley to me, and tapped her forehead gently with her fan, just as Charley snapped his head back from its constrained position. "Clothed," said she, "but not altogether in his right mind. But

we shall never get done if we go on in this way. Come! But before I go any further, Jack, I must ask you to remember that I was not as well acquainted with the Don at this time, as any reader would be who had read your book up to this point. I see that you call him a 'man of surprises' (a rather Frenchified phrase, by the way); but please bear in mind that the only surprise he had ever caused me was when he bloomed forth as a violinist. All the other surprises were devoured by this Silent Tomb," said she, glancing towards Charley. Him, detected in the act of smoothing with his pipe-stem the jagged, interior edges of a blue annulus, she brought to his senses by a sharp fan-tap on his head.

"What is to become of our Monograph if you go on in this way?"

"Monograph? I thought you were on a polygraph, or a pantograph, and was amusing myself till you came back to the subject."

"Very true. Well, I took my seat in the stern, and he sat opposite me, looking much amused, and very curious to know what my whim was. I think I was a 'girl of surprises' when I began. 'Do you know, Mr. Don,' said I, 'are you aware that you are a Fiend in Human Shape?' He burst out laughing. He obviously thought that I was unusually crazy, even for me. 'No,' said he, 'I can't say that I ever appeared to myself in that light; but we will suppose that you are right; what then?' And he settled himself to be amused. I was far from amused, I assure you. I was at my wit's end, not knowing what to say next, so I began to make holes in the sand (as observed by the lynx-eyed Boneless). Give a dog a bad name and kill him; get the reputation of being a wag—should I say waggess?—and your simplest acts amuse. As I looked down I could see, out of the corner of my eye, his wondering smile. I felt that he mistook my embarrassment for archness, and that my silence was, in his eyes, an artistic rhetorical pause. By the way, to change the subject" (Charley groaned and received a rap), "that's where we women have the advantage of men. You are the besieging army, we the beleaguered

city. We can see any confusion in your ranks, while a panic behind our walls is invisible to you. If you feel confused, you imagine that you look so; and then you *do* look so. It is different with us. We know—"

Here Charley seized his pipe and began filling it with the most obtrusive vigor. "Conundrum!" said he, claiming attention with uplifted forefinger.

"Well?"

"What is the difference between a woman's tongue and a perpetual-motion machine? Answer: I give it up!"

As I could never learn to whirl smoke-wreaths, I twirled my thumbs during the interruption of our session that ensued. The bashful and evasive Charley upset every chair in the room, save mine, behind which he was ultimately captured and punished. "Pshaw! Who minds Jack?" said Alice, stooping to right her rocking-chair. "Ugh! How smoky your moustache is!"

"I never heard anything like that while we were engaged."

"And for a very good reason," said she, with a toss of her head.

"Illustrious Bæotian!" sighed Charley.

Alice threw herself into her chair, panting and laughing. "Where was I?"

"You were without a compass, in a word-ocean without a shore."

"On the contrary, I was on the shore, and poking holes in the sand. 'Well,' said the Don, 'what should be done to a man who was so unfortunate as to be a Fiend in Human Shape?'"

"'I should say that he needed a guardian. He lacks the warning voice of a mother.'"

"'But we will suppose that he has no mother.'"

"'Then let him find one. How, for example,' said I, feeling my way, 'how do you think that I would look the character.' And I put on a demure expression.

"'Admirably, admirably!'"

"'Then you adopt me as a mother?'"

"'Yes.'"

"‘A mother with a warning voice?’ I added, beginning to find my soundings.

"‘A mother with a voice soft as a zephyr!’

"‘No, with a voice of warning.’

"Up to this time he had been watching me somewhat with the expression of a child when some one is about to touch the spring of a Jack-in-the-Box. Up I was going to bounce, in some high antic or other. But just here his countenance took on a look of perplexity. I suppose my voice became one of warning. Can’t I talk seriously *sometimes*, Mr. Frobisher?"

"You? Oh, Lord!"

"Well, you needn’t be so emphatic. What will Jack think?"

"Pshaw! Who minds Jack? Ouch!"

"Well, where was I? Ah! ‘No, with a voice of warning,’ said I, looking rather grave, I suppose. ‘Very well,’ said he, ‘with a voice of warning.’ ‘I am your mother, then?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘And you are my son?’ ‘Yes, mumma,’ said he, smiling, and holding up his knee with interlaced fingers and looking very comfortable.

"‘My son,’ said I, with perfect gravity, and feeling very uncomfortable. ‘My dear child, I need not tell you that I feel all a mother’s affection for you. I have given you so many proofs of this ever since I trotted you on my foot, a wee thing,—you, not the foot,—that I do not feel called upon to add any more evidence of the love I bear you.’ ‘Darling mumpsy!’ said he. You may look incredulous, but he said it. ‘But no one is perfect,’—he nodded; ‘then you will not be surprised to hear that your loving mother sees in you, mingled with many excellencies that make her proud, some faults,—one fault at least? You will not feel hurt? Consider your head patted.’ And I began again poking holes in the sand. ‘What is my crime? Speak, mother dear?’ ‘You are a handsome young man.’ ‘Ah, but how could I help that, with such a lovely little mother?’ ‘No frivolity, my child; no bandying compliments with your old mother. No matter whence your good looks are derived, you are *devastatingly* handsome—’"

"How could you say such a thing to a man's face, Alice?"

"To put him in good humor. You are all vain, you know.

"Upon that he threw back his head and gave a shout of laughter. 'Go on,' said he, lolling back and nursing his knee as before. 'No,' said I, 'the fatal gift of beauty is not a crime in itself; it is the use one—'

"'Do you know,' said he, interrupting me and leaning forward with deep conviction in his eyes, 'that you are the most extraordinary girl—I mean mother—that I ever encountered? You ought to write; it is your positive duty. So much brightness—tit for tat, you know—ought not to waste its sweetness, etc. Have you never thought of writing a book?' 'Not I,—Mary Rolfe is our genius; I leave that to her.'

"His face flushed slightly, and instantly I changed my whole plan of campaign. I had been making a reconnoissance under cover of the mother and son fiction; but like a wide-awake general, I now, seeing the enemy in confusion, unmasked my batteries and opened fire; that is, I dropped my parasol and sprang towards him with an anxious look: 'Are you ill?' I asked.

"His face grew crimson, for he knew what I meant. You see he had once or twice heard me making fun of a certain threadbare trick of the novelists. It would seem that characters in romances never have the least idea that any one is in love with any one. One party casually mentions to a second party the name of a third party. Instantly party No. 2 changes color. 'Are you ill?' cries No. 1. 'It is nothing,' gasps No. 2; 'it will pass in a moment.'"

"Yes," said Charley, "and how singular it is that No. 1 never for a moment suspects the truth, but invariably goes off under the conviction that the poor heroine has eaten something indigestible,—has a pain—nay, even—who minds Jack?—an ache!"

"How shrewd a device!" said Alice, laughing. "The author lets the reader know, while concealing it from the actors in the drama, that the poor girl is desperately gone."

"Yes," added Charley; "the author may be said to tip the reader a wink, 'unbeknownst'—behind No. 1's back. Now don't, Alice; do sit down and let's go on. That's right. Why, in a novel, even a physician would ask, 'Are you ill?'—even *he* could not distinguish between the indications of love and the symptoms of colic."

"In one word," said Alice, "those words make a book a novel,—and their absence makes this—a sym—"

Charley here burst into a quotation, speaking fearfully through his nose: "Of this disease the great Napoleon died. Some say that Napoleon was a great man; some say that Washington was a great man; but *I* say that true greatness consists in moral grandeur. With this brief digression, gentlemen, we will resume our subject."

"Why, who on earth could have said that?" cried Alice; "it is immense!"

"Have you never heard Jack or myself quote it before? It was the one solitary gem of rhetoric in the annual course of lectures delivered by old P-P-P-P—too many confounded p-p-p-p's! Imitate his example,—resume!"

"Where did I leave him? Ah! 'Are you ill?' said I, and he blushed as red as a rose. I waited a moment, then said, 'You have lost the cue; repeat after me,—'It—is—nothing!'" 'It is nothing,' repeated he; 'it—will—soon—pass! it will soon pass.'

"Will it?" said I, charging bayonets. 'That is the question, Mr. Don,' said I, folding my arms,—these two, not the bayonets,—'you are in love!' I looked him straight in the eyes, for my blood was up! My fear was all gone!"

("It has never come back!" said Charley.)

"To deny it would be useless as well as ungallant. Who would believe me? Constantly associated for so long with a bevy of charming—"

"A bevy! Are you enamoured of the whole flock? Is there no bright particular star? May I make a guess? Ah, I see I need not name her."

"Miss Carter," said he, after a pause, 'you seem so

different from your usual self this morning! Or are you merely laying a train for a phenomenal display of fire-works? Are you in earnest, or are you preparing to blow me up with an explosion of fun?

"I am in earnest, and I am going to blow you up, too. Listen: but before broaching my main topic, I must say one word on Mary Rolfe."

"I had thought that she was to be the main theme of your sermon."

"Of course *you* thought so,—perfectly natural, the wish being father to the thought.' How that made him blush and stammer,—almost as badly as the Silent Tomb in its courting days. Now, boys" (meaning her husband and the subscriber), "I leave it to you: wasn't I a regular Macchiavelli? Didn't I manage it neatly? You see it would not have done to let him see that I was acting as Mary's friend, even though without her knowledge and consent; and she would never have forgiven me. So, at the very outset, I planted an interrogation-point in his mind. 'What is she coming to?' he kept thinking; but I was *there already*. I had made my reconnoissance and found out where the enemy was weak; but, as you veterans know, after a reconnoissance, the trouble is to get back to camp without loss. This is how I managed that: 'To begin,' said I, 'with Mary Rolfe. Her you love. That's admitted? Well, silence gives consent. Now, whether you have told her so in words or not is more than I can tell; for, although Mary and I are very intimate, girls do not—'"

"Oh!" grunted Charley.

"Well, in theory they do not," replied Alice, laughing.

"Whether you have told her in words," said I—

"I have told her neither in words nor otherwise," said he.

"Indeed," said I, "that's strange! strange, that you should have kept her alone in darkness. You must be aware that you have told every one else, as plainly as looks, at least, can speak. But I must proceed; *I have no time to discuss that.*" "One moment,—you say that my looks have revealed my sentiments. Are you quite sure of this?" "The fabled ostrich and the sand!" said

I, laughing. 'Confound it! Excuse me,—well, I suppose I deceive myself, as other men do. There is our friend Charley, for instance, the woman-hater! Now, he fondly imagines that nobody knows that he adores somebody!'"

"Fondly! H'm! Well, go on," said Charley.

"I colored faintly at this, for blushing is becoming to me. 'And, yet,' said I, 'I venture to say that the somebody in question knew what was taking place in his mind even before he suspected it.' 'Did you really?' asked he. 'I have no doubt *she* did,' said I. 'All women are alike in that,' I added; '*but let us proceed.*' 'One moment,' said he; 'if all women are alike in this intuitive power, then I infer that Miss Rolfe cannot fail to have remarked that I—' Here I gave my shoulders a diplomatic shrug, which brought him to a dead pause. He nodded his head gently up and down a little while, and seemed in great perplexity. 'Miss Carter,' said he, suddenly looking up, 'will you be my friend and advise me?' 'I am your friend,' said I, 'and will do what I can in the way of advice.' Then he looked down for a long time, his face all corrugated with cross-purposes. My blood began to run a little chill. Was the great mystery about to be revealed?

"'You say that by my bearing and looks I have, to all intents and purposes, declared myself a lover of Miss Rolfe. Now, suppose—and I pledge you my word that it is so—suppose all this was unintentional on my part; suppose that I have striven not to show just what you say I have shown,'—he paused again as before. 'No,' said he, resuming, in a half-musing way, as though he thought aloud, 'I don't see how I can lay the whole case before her' (meaning me, I suppose). 'Ah,' said he, his face brightening, 'let us suppose a case. Suppose I loved you dearly,—a *very* supposable case, by the way,—and you did not suspect it.' '*Not* a supposable case; but go on.' 'Well,' said he, smiling, 'at that wharf, yonder, lies a ship ready to sail. I am to go in her to seek my fortune in the wide world, somewhere; ought I to speak, or would it not be nobler to bid you farewell with my secret locked in my breast?'"

"I saw, of course, how matters stood. The supposed case was a purely imaginary one. His perplexity had been due to the difficulty of avoiding all allusion to his incognito. 'I don't pretend to know which would be the nobler course for *you*; but *I* should want to know it, and hear it from your own lips, too, were you to be off for Japan in fifteen minutes. The sweetest music in the world to a woman's ears is the voice of a man telling her that he loves her; and it is music of so potent a character, that it often melts a heart that was cold before.'

"That shot told. He threw his head back, like a horse taking the bit between his teeth. It was plain that he had formed a resolution of some sort. By the way, Jack, I could never understand how so transparent a man as the Don, showing his inmost feelings with every glance of his eye, and every movement of his features; with a face which was a barometer of his slightest emotions, could ever have kept a secret. Here is the S. T., on the other hand. Whisper a secret into *his* ear, and it is like dropping a stone into an artesian well. It is the last you ever hear of it. There may be a subterranean splash, but you never see it. But the Don's face always reminded me of a lake that the merest pebble causes to ripple from shore to shore.

"Well, the reconnoissance was a perfect success, and all that was left, as I thought, was to retire under cover of a rattling skirmish fire.* Very naturally, I did not suspect that my position was mined. But it was; and I trod on the percussion fuse.

"'Well,' said I, 'I don't suppose you would ever get tired of hearing me talk about Mary, but you have never heard the mother's "warning voice" yet, and you know you came to the Fateful Argo to hear that.'

"'That's true! Would you mind if I lit a cigar? Thanks!' And, opening my parasol, he struck a light behind it, and began puffing away, with his head thrown back, and nursing his knee, as before; the picture of serene contentment. His face was calm as the

* How strange, even pathetic, is the sound of these military metaphors from a woman's lips.—*Ed.*

placid little lake of which I spoke just now, and he looked as though, the absorbing question in his mind being set at rest, he was at my service, to be amused and entertained.

"A man of your wide experience, Mr. Don,' said I, beginning the skirmishing, 'must have remarked the fact that girls will talk.'

"True, very true!' And with dreamy, half-smiling, uplifted eyes, he thrust his cigar into the other corner of his mouth, as though by anticipation he rolled under his tongue some morsel of my nonsense. 'Go on, laughter-compelling siren!'

"Again, you cannot fail to have observed that girls, being wound up to talk, by nature, must needs talk about one another or—the rest of mankind. As we are not philosophers, could it be otherwise?"

"Impossible!' said he, rocking gently to and fro. 'Proceed, enchantress!'

"Well, you being included among the rest of mankind—'

"You have occasionally honored me? And what did you say about me?"

"With one accord, that you were in love!"

"You have already entrapped me into a confession on that point. Chaunt, Circe!"

"But the accord ends there; we are not unanimous as to the charmer's name."

"Not unanimous? I don't understand."

"Well, we female doctors are agreed as to the disease, but differ as to its cause. The majority of the Faculty at Elmington assign, as the source of your trouble, Mary's soulful eyes; but one or two, even of us, and most of the neighboring physicians, urge another name; while one or two, with the frankness so common among doctors, admit that they do not know what is the matter with you."

"You surprise me! I had gathered from what you said but a moment ago, that the symptoms in my case were so pronounced as not even to require a formal diagnosis."

"But doctors will differ, and when they do—"

"The patient must decide. Well, I have done so. But—to drop your metaphor—I cannot conceive what you mean by suggesting that I have the credit of adoring two or more young persons?"

"You may recall, Jack, that the Silent Tomb was equally perplexed on the same point, and that when I asked him 'Mary or Lucy?' he amazed our whole circle by bursting into a laugh. Then the wretch, in repeating the names after me, so carefully abstained from placing the accent of astonishment on either, that not even a professional piano-tuner could have detected any difference in the sounds—oh, the artesian well! I remembered this. The Don had expressed no surprise when I named Mary Rolfe; probably, then, it was the mention of Lucy that had amazed the S. T. It flashed across my female mind, in the tenth part of a second, how singularly Mr. Frobisher had acted, after the first flush of astonishment was over,—how he pursed up his brow, gazed far away, in fact, mooned around in the most absurd fashion, instead of telling me all about it at once. Would the Don, too, laugh, when I mentioned Lucy's name?"

"We do you that honor, at any rate," said I.

"We? Who are we? Which of you belong to the Rolfe faction, and which to—you have not mentioned the name of the other dear charmer?"

"Well, so and so are for Mary, and so and so for the other."

"Her name? But one moment,—Miss Rolfe herself—you failed to place *her*. Would it be a breach of confidence to do so?"

"She has not taken me into her confidence; therefore I have the right to make what surmises I choose. I place her between the two. She does not know what to think."

"Again he snapped his head backwards, as though he said that he would settle that shortly. 'Tranquilized, he relit his cigar, which had gone out, and again lolled back; and cocking up his cigar in the corner of his mouth, asked. 'And the other?'"

"Guess," said I.

"Dropping his chin on his breast, with a quiet smile,

he pretended to reflect for a moment. 'I am afraid I shall have to give it up. Oh, how dull I have been! How intolerably stupid!' And placing his hand on his heart, he made me a low bow; then throwing back his head, with a merry laugh, 'Capital, capital!' he ejaculated.

"'No,' said I, 'her name is not Alice. Guess again.

"A flash of surprise followed by a look of rising curiosity. 'Really, you perplex me!'

"'You cannot recall any of the girls except Mary, in whom you have shown marked interest?'—he shook his head—'an ever increasing interest?' 'An ever increasing interest?' repeated he, opening his eyes wide upon me; then, looking upon the ground, he appeared to reflect. 'Not Miss Kitty? No? Nor Miss Jennie? Not Miss Jennie either! Upon my word! But you *seem* serious; are you really?'

"'I am. You cannot think of any girl whom you have visited again and again, of late?'

"'Visited!' exclaimed he. 'Why, then she is not one of our Elmington guests!'

"I fixed my eyes upon him, and saw nothing, though I had always thought him as transparent as glass. It was my turn now to be bewildered. 'What!' I exclaimed, 'can't you guess, *now*, to whom I allude?'

"Gazing at me with the look of one who had totally lost his reckoning, he shook his head slowly from side to side. I was positively vexed. There came over me the impatient feeling of a teacher who is striving in vain to hammer an idea into the head of a numskull. 'Well, then,' said I, with some heat; and throwing out my arm at full length, I pointed across the River.

"'Across the River, too,' said he, with contracted features. 'Upon my word, this conundrum grows interesting.' And with his eyes fixed upon the sand, he stroked his tawny beard. 'Across the River—let me see—Miss Jenny Royal—dinner-call—no other visit. The Misses Surrey—party-call. Miss Adelaide Temple—breakfast—going to pay my respects to-morrow. Anywhere else? No. Well,' said he, suddenly throwing up his hands, 'I give it up! What is the answer?'

"I looked at him for a moment, but could make nothing of him. 'There! There! There!' I exclaimed, at last, stabbing at Oakhurst with my forefinger.

"'Where?' asked he, looking across the River and up and down the shore opposite.

"'There! There!'

"'You seem to be pointing to Oakhurst.'

"My arm dropped across the gunwale.

"'Oakhurst!' exclaimed he, with a most natural look of surprise. 'You don't mean Oakhurst? Why, there are no guests there! There is no one but Lucy—Miss Lucy!'

"'That's true,' answered I, dryly. 'No one but Lucy.'

"He leaned forward and scanned my features with a mixture of amusement and curiosity. 'Surely you have not been alluding to *her*?' I said nothing. 'Seriously? Yes?' And with a shout of merry laughter, he threw back his head with such vigor that his cigar flew out of his mouth and over his shoulder upon the sand; and then, without the least warning, his laughter ended in an abrupt 'Oh!'

"He rose to his feet; not with a spring, but slowly, slowly, thoughtfully tugging at his moustache, and his eyes intently glaring into vacancy, as he rose and rose, till he seemed to my excited imagination to assume almost colossal proportions. Then he slowly subsided again into his seat, and sat there raking his beard with his long fingers. A chilly sensation crept over me. I tried to speak, but could think of no word wherewith to break the spell of silence. At last he turned his eyes upon mine.

"'So it seems to you that I have been paying Lucy Poythress much attention?'

"'Seems, Mr. Don? How can you use that word? It is a patent fact that must be as clear to your eyes as to mine.'

"'Yes, but what kind of attention? She is musical—so am I. I have rowed across the River frequently, to play with her. Nay, my object has not been pleasure alone. I have been giving her what are called, in

Paris, accompaniment-lessons. Does that amount to what is called attention, in a technical sense? And you acknowledge yourself that these visits never deceived *you*. *You* never thought that they were prompted by love.'

"'No, they did not deceive *me*. What if they have deceived—'

"'HER!'

"The word shot from his lips like a ball from a cannon. He sprang from the boat and began to stride to and fro in the sand, his nostrils dilated and his eyes fixed. (He used a dreadful expression, too, which was not at all patriotic, though it did end in —nation.) Presently he turned quickly towards me, and leaning forward, with his hands grasping the gunwale of the boat, eagerly asked, 'But, Lucy, surely you do not think that—that she—is—what you call interested?'

"'She has not betrayed any symptoms of that character.'

"'Thank you,' said he, seizing my hand with a grip that made me wince; and he began to stride to and fro again, till I stopped him.

"'But, Mr. Don,' said I, 'though she may not be interested now, it does not follow that she may not become—'

"'Never fear,' said he, biting his lip with a look of fierce determination, and striding up and down again.

"Thinking to soothe him: 'Be careful! Remember, we girls think you a handsome, fascinating dog; so don't raise false hopes.'

"'No danger, no danger!' replied he, earnestly, and without even a smile for my compliment. 'What a fool I have been!'

"He stood reflectively stroking his moustache for a while, and I thought the scene over, when turning impetuously upon me, and seizing me by both wrists with a grasp of steel, 'You don't think so?' he cried. 'Tell me you do not, for heaven's sake!'

"He seemed totally unconscious of the force he was using, for he jerked me against the gunwale with such violence that I should have been hurt had I not been

so frightened. Oh, what eyes he had! I can feel their glare now, as I remember how he held me as in a vise, and, bringing his face close to mine, looked me through and through.

"Tell you what?" I gasped.

"Lucy—she—the poor child—she has not—fallen in love with me: you know! Tell me so, for God's sake!"

"His fingers sank into my wrists, and his fearful eyes burned into my brain.

"No! I am *sure* she has not!"

"Thanks, thanks, thanks!" he cried; and lifting both my hands to his lips, he covered them with fervid kisses. I was not surprised; I was past that point. Had he thrown his arms around me, I honestly believe I should have been neither astonished nor angry."

"I wish he had," said Charley, musing. "Poor boy, poor boy!—well, well!" and, sighing, he fixed his eyes upon the fire.

Alice, with a look of tender sympathy, took her husband's hand in hers.

CHAPTER L.

THE return of our Jason and Medea from the Argo was very different from their departure for that fateful craft. If their going had been operative, their coming was elegiac. A salvo of salutations was preparing as they approached, and the Gallery watched the couple as they drew near, momentarily expecting some outburst of jollity on their part; but expectancy slowly faded as their nearer and nearer approach brought into ever clearer view the faces of the Argonaut and the Enchantress.

I have called the Don a man of surprises. What had he been saying to Alice? thought every one as she tripped up the piazza steps with an effort to appear jaunty and careless; but her cheeks showed splotches of burning red, while his features were pale and set. What had happened?

I cannot say what others thought, but I happen to have learned since what flashed across Mary's mind. The Don had proposed to Alice and Alice had rejected him, had declined his *first* proposal merely, for of course she could not have meant to reject him for good and all. What passed her comprehension was how Alice had had the hardihood to propose a walk which she must have known was to have that result. She was amazed to think how blind she had been all along. How could she have failed to remark what was patent to all, that the Don hung upon every word that fell from Alice's lips?

I happen to know, too, what Charley thought: "*She* tackled him! What a girl! what a girl! Bless her little heart!"

"Well, Alice," said my grandfather, "you know the rule." Alice looked up. "Whenever any of my girls have had a trip on the Argo—"

"Oh," said Alice, "we kiss you on our return." And she suited action to word.

"I accept the amendment, but that is not what I meant. Give an account of yourself. What luck?"

Alice's face grew serene under the old-time courtesy of my grandfather's manner, and she was herself again.

"You will have to excuse me, Uncle Tom. A girl who has been properly brought up cannot fail to feel that there *are* occasions when her mother is her only proper confidant."

Even the Don laughed at this, and the hard lines passed out of his face. He looked at Alice with an expression of admiring amusement, seeing how easily she had laughed away the awkward pause that their return had caused.

When Mary, poor tempest-tossed soul, saw that admiring glance, she stamped her foot, though inaudibly, —stamped it with vexation, and inwardly begged Alice's pardon; for it was not the glance of a lover, rejected or other.

"There they come down the lawn," suddenly cried my grandfather. "Charley, where is the glass? Thank

you. They are getting into the boat,—Mrs. Poythress is in,—now for Lucy,—she is in,—and now Mr. P. there! The first flash of the oars! They are off! Charley," added he, handing the glass to Mrs. Carter, "did you think to send word to the Herr to come, as the Poythresses were to spend the day with us? Ah, I remember, he could not come. Well, Lucy and Mr. Smith will have to entertain us to-day."

"Ah," sighed Mary, "in that boat sits my real rival. How could I have thought such a thing of dear Alice?"

When the boat neared the shore, the gentlemen (there were only three at Elmington at this time,—my grandfather, Charley, and the Don) went to meet the guests. Mrs. Carter went also, to greet Mrs. Poythress; and Alice, too; saying, when she saw her mother leaning on Mr. Whacker's arm, that she thought it prudent to look after her father's interests, when her mother was carrying on so in his absence. I am afraid, however, that she did not keep a very strict watch on her mother; for she and Charley were soon considerably in the rear of the rest, and engaged, as was obvious to Mary (who remained on the piazza), in a very earnest conversation, the subject of which it hardly needed a woman's instinct to divine. She felt sure that her friend was describing to Charley her interview with the Don; and as Alice grew more and more earnest in her manner and vehement in her gestures, her curiosity rose at last into a sickening intensity, for a voice whispered in her ear that she, somehow, was deeply concerned in what those two were saying. She forgot where she was, forgot the girls seated near her, saw only Charley and Alice; and leaning farther and farther forward, as they receded, strove to drink in with her soulful eyes the words that her ears could not hear.

"Gracious, Mary, what is the matter?"

She had seen Alice stop and turn towards Charley and gaze at him with an almost tragic earnestness. Then, suddenly springing towards him and seizing his wrist, she had given him a pull that shook his equilibrium. With nerves unstrung by the harassing doubts of the last few weeks, and wrought up to the highest

pitch of painful curiosity as to the subject-matter of the singular interview between Alice and the Don in the Argo that morning,—seeing Alice detailing that interview to Charley,—when she witnessed Alice's violent illustration of what must have occurred between her and the Don, Mary had leaped, with a cry, from her seat.

“Gracious, Mary, what is the matter?”

At these words of her neighbor Mary sank back in her chair with a vivid blush and a confused smile, and was silent.

“You frightened me so! I thought some one had fallen out of the boat, perhaps. What was the matter?”

“I am sure I can't tell; I suppose I must have been dreaming.”

The neighbor cast her eyes towards the boat, and seeing among the approaching guests Lucy leaning on the Don's arm, thought her own thoughts.

The day was an unusually warm one for February, and, a vote being taken, it was decided not to enter the house; and our friends soon grouped themselves to their liking on the sunny piazza; the elders at one end, in the middle the young people, except Charley and Alice, who sat by themselves at the other end of the porch.

These twain often found themselves isolated now. Wherever they chose their seats every one seemed to think they needed room, and moved off,—treatment that Charley bore like the philosopher that he was. The fact is that, from being a man who seemed to have nothing to say, he became, about this time, one who could not find time to say all that he had on his mind. At this period of his life he used to lie awake in bed, for hours and hours, as he has since confessed to me [And to me. A.] [Wh-e-e-w! *C. F.*], running over in his mind the things that he had omitted to say to Alice the evening before, and resolving to say them all immediately after breakfast next morning. On this occasion a mountain torrent of words had risen in his soul during the hour's absence of his charmer in the Argo. But he was not uttering them. Nor did it

matter in the least, as they would have been as like thousands of others that he had been whispering and whispering into her rosy ear, as one drop of water of the supposed torrent was like another. The twain were rather silent, in fact. They were quietly watching the Don and Lucy.

One other pair of eyes took in every movement of the Don, another pair of ears lost never a word nor an inflection of his voice. (Mary was, it is true, engaged in an animated discussion with Mr. Poythress on the subject of Byron,—he denouncing the man, while she lauded the poet,—but then she was a woman.) “How changed he is!” sighed she. “A moment ago, pale as ashes; how bright and cheerful now! And Lucy! I think I should try not to look *quite* so happy, if I were you! Why not announce your engagement in words, as you are doing every moment by your manner?”

Alice, on the contrary, to Charley: “How well he is acting his part! He knows we are looking at him, and see the easy air of an old friend that he has assumed towards Lucy! Not assumed, either, for his bearing towards her has always been just that.”

“So I have always thought,” said Charley.

“Certainly; only that manner is rather more pronounced than usual. The merest glance would convince any one that he was no lover of Lucy’s.”

“‘He that hath bent him o’er the dead,
Ere the first day of death is fled,—
The first dark day,’” etc., etc.,

quoted Mary.

No voice that I have ever heard quite equalled Mary’s in sweetness, even in familiar talk. Soft and tender, it was yet singularly clear, though marked by a certain patrician absence of that exaggerated articulation so characteristic of other communities, where not the *norma loquendi* of gentle ancestors is the touchstone of speech, but the printed word, and the spelling-book, and the unlovely precision of the free school. But now that she was uttering a wail over her own crushed heart, and, in unison therewith, Byron’s passionate

lament over the dead glories of the Greece of Thermopylæ and of Marathon, the tremulous fervor of her vibrating tones was touching beyond description. Two or three fair heads had clustered near hers to catch her low-breathed words; and when, turning to Mr. Poythress with a certain triumphant enthusiasm in her soulful eyes, she, with a slight but impassioned gesture, ended with the words, "'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more," there was a sense of choking in more than one snowy throat.

As for Mrs. Carter,—sympathetic soul,—I am told that there were actually tears in her eyes.

"Upon my word," began Mr. Poythress, ready to yield.

Perhaps Mary heard what he said as he re-defined his position; but his words can be of no interest to the reader.

"See," mused she, "what an easy air he has assumed towards Lucy! And Lucy! how matter-of-fact! Any one could see at half a glance that they were acknowledged lovers. See with what an air of content he looks about him! There, he is exchanging glances with Alice; and she understands him, of course. She is telling Mr. Frobisher that they are engaged. Ah, he glanced at me, then, and so furtively! No wonder he averts his eyes when they meet mine! Yet even yesterday I thought I saw in his look—well, well; *that* is all over."

Alice, on the contrary: "See, he can't keep his eyes off her! He is just dying to say something to her; and it will be to the point. Ah, Uncle Tom has put himself just between us." And she leaned forward so as to put Charley almost behind her back, but went on talking, all the same, in a low voice: "How could those girls have thought that he was in love with Lucy or Lucy in love with him!"

"Horrible!" ejaculated Charley, in a voice that startled Alice. She turned and looked at him. Had she turned more quickly, she might have caught a different expression on his face. As it was, he was gazing out upon the River with a stony calm upon his features.

"What did you say?" asked she, beginning to doubt her ears. "'Horrible?'"

"Who? I?" And the gray eyes met the hazel without blinking.

"Did you not say that the idea of the Don and Lucy being lovers was horrible?"

"Very likely. Of late I have been capable of saying anything."

"What did you mean?"

"If I said it,—which I don't admit; and if I meant anything,—which, likely enough, I did not—"

"'Horrible' is so unlike you."

"Now you flatter me."

"Tell me, goose."

"You say that the Don loves Mary. Then wouldn't it be sad if Lucy loved him? And you tell me that Mary loves the Don. Now wouldn't it be too bad if the Don loved Lucy? Ought not true love to run smooth if it can?"

Alice fixed her eyes upon Charley's, and scanned his features long and intently. There was nothing to be seen there save a smile that was almost infantile in its sweetness and simplicity. "Do you think I am handsome?" asked he, languidly. "They tell me I am good."

"Do you know, Mr. Frobisher, I sometimes think you know more about the— There she goes, and he after her!"

"Mr. Poythress," Mary had said, laughing, "my defence of Byron has made my throat dry."

"Nor did it lack much of making our eyes moist," replied he, with a courtly inclination of his patrician head.

"Let me get you a glass of water," interrupted the Don, moving towards the door.

"Ah, thank you, never mind." And rising hastily, she made for the door with a precipitancy that vexed Alice; for she saw in it a pointed indication of unwillingness on Mary's part to accept even this little service at the hands of the Don. She moved so rapidly that she had passed in at the door before the Don could reach it; but he, whether or not he interpreted her

motives as Alice did, followed her within the house. Instantly the cloud that had passed over Alice's face was gone, and a sudden smile shone forth. She sprang to her feet. "Why do we tarry here all the day? It is moved and seconded that we adjourn to the Hall. Fall in, company! Attention! Shoulder—I mean seize arms!" And skipping away from Charley, she laid hands upon Mr. Poythress ("You take Mrs. Poythress," she had whispered to Charley; "that will make them all come"), and away they marched down the steps and across the lawn, towards the Hall, Alice leading with her rataplan, rataplan, and enacting a sort of combination of captain, drum-major, and vivandière.

Nothing so much delighted our slaves, in those days, as any jollity on the part of their masters. Happy and careless themselves, when they saw their betters unbend they realized more clearly, perhaps, that they were men and brothers.

"Lord 'a' mussy!" cried Aunt Polly at the kitchen door, letting fall a dish-cloth.

"What dat, gal?" carelessly asked Uncle Dick, who sat breakfasting in his usual stately and leisurely fashion. Aunt Polly made no reply, being seized with a sudden paroxysm which caused her to collapse into half her normal stature. Straightening herself out again, and wiping her eyes with her apron, "Oh, Lord, *how* long!" she ejaculated, giving the door-sill two simultaneous flaps with slippers that were a world too wide. "What's a-comin' next? dat's all I wants to know." And she began to rock to and fro. Seeing her for the second time telescope into a three-foot cook:

"What de matter wid de gal?" said Uncle Dick, rising with dignity, and wiping his rather unctuous lips.

"'Fore Gaud," cried his spouse, "I do b'lieve dat chile gwine to make everybody at Elmin'ton crazy befo' she done. Mussiful heaven, jess look at ole mahrster, and he a-steppin' high as a colt, and Miss Alice a-struttin' jess like she had on a ridgimental unicorn, and a-back-in' and a-linin' of 'em up wid her parasol! Forrard, march! Jess lissen at her sojer talk, and ain't she a

pretty little critter? No wonder Marse Charley ravin' 'stracted 'bout her. Lor', Dick, let de boy look!"

Zip, by a dextrous ducking of his head, had just evaded the sweeping palm of his chief. "What is dese young niggers a-comin' to?" exclaimed this virtuous personage. "Boy, don't you see dem flies." And he pointed to the table he had just left. "And you a-gapin' at de white folks, 'stid o' mindin' your business!"

One of the perquisites of Zip's position as junior butler was waving a feather brush over the bald head of his senior when he sat at meat. Dick had elected him to this office on the plea of fotechin' of him up in the way he should go; and, being a strict disciplinarian, had resented his abandoning the post of duty without orders.

Zip made a perfunctory dash, with his brush, at the flies,—whom, by the way, he somewhat resembled in disposition; for as you shall not ruffle the temper, or even hurt the feelings of one of these, during your afternoon nap, by a slap, be it ever so violent and contumelious, if it but miss him; so Zip-Moses accounted all blows that failed to reach that anvil-shaped head of his not as insults and injuries, but clear gain rather. Zip, therefore, was not long in finding his way back, on tiptoe, to where he could get a glimpse of what was going forward on the lawn; even as that reckless insect blanches not as he tickles the somnolent nose of a blacksmith; for hath he not his weather eye upon the doughty fist of his foe?

"Left face!" cried Alice; "forward, file right, march!" And her company went tumbling with bursts of laughter up the steps and into the Hall.

Lucy took her seat at the piano.

"Why, where is the Don?" asked my grandfather, looking round.

"Lucy has a new solo for us," said Alice,—"*perhaps*,"—added she, conscience-stricken.

"Oho!" cried Mr. Whacker, settling himself.

"What new solo?" asked Lucy.

"That—what do you call it?" replied Alice, rather vaguely.

"The Sonata I have been learning?"

"Oh, yes; that's what we want."

Lucy struck the opening chords and began.

Charley leaned carelessly forward and whispered in Alice's ear,—

"*This is a solo; that?*" And he nodded slightly in the direction of the house.

"A duet. What did you think of my manœuvre?"

"Immense!"

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC.

BEING AN INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER LI.

How and by how many cooks this broth has been brewed, our patrons have already been duly informed. Up to this point the firm, as a firm, has been responsible for everything that has been written; for though our Mr. Whacker, having the pen of a ready writer, has had the task of arranging our wares in show-cases, our silent partners have furnished the bulk of said wares. And we desire to say to the public that our joint labors have been, thus far, carried forward most joyously, and with perfect harmony.

Save only in one particular.

Our female associate has been grumbling, from the very first, at the treatment that Love has received at the hands of our Mr. Whacker. She has again and again protested against what she calls the mocking touches of his pencil, when he would portray that passion which is so tender, and yet hath power to move the world. He, on his side, has defended his handiwork, if not with success, at least with a certain manly vigor, having observed more than once that he could not for the life of him get it into his head how it could be High Art to make your heroes say in a book what a Christian would be hanged before he would say, or be overheard saying, at least, in real life; adding, with a

tartness born of his wrangles at the Bar, that it passed his comprehension why authors should be at the pains of causing imaginary beings to make fools of themselves, when nature had served so many real ones that turn. In reply, our Alice said that, if that were so, they were but holding the mirror up to nature; a retort that seemed to dispose of our legal brother; and so our Alice was encouraged to go on and add (using the bluntness of a friend) that all this talk about love-making being an exhibition of an aggravated type of idiocy was, to use the mildest name, the merest affectation, and could have originated only in the brain of a sore-headed old bachelor, who is forever talking of marrying, but who has not the vaguest conception of what love really means. Our Charley, meanwhile, would only smoke and chuckle and chuckle and smoke, when we asked for his vote to end our controversy; and as his smoke-wreaths were perfectly symmetrical, inclining neither this way nor that, and as he chuckled on both sides of him, neither of us belligerents had the least pretext for claiming the victory. Yet, in the end, it was he who closed our debate.

"Jack-Whack," said he (ever judicious), "turn about is fair play. Suppose we let Alice write this fifty-first chapter. Let it be hers entirely, and let her acknowledge it as such, while you may disown it."

To this we are all agreed. In testimony whereof we have hereunto, etc., etc., etc.

CHARLES FROBISHER.

[Seal.]

ALICE DITTO.

[Seal.]

JOHN BOUCHE WHACKER.

[Seal.*]

[**Porpoise.* Ha! ha! ha!]

When Charley came out with his Compromise Resolutions, Alice was at first much taken aback, turning red and white by turns; nor do I believe she would ever have consented, had I not permitted myself to smile a rather triumphant smile of defiance. It was then that, nettled by this, she brought down her plump little fist upon the table and cried, "*I'll do it.*"

"Brava!" cried Charley, patting her on the back.

"And you, sir!" said she, turning upon him. "I don't believe *you* think I can do it."

"I believe you capable of anything."

"Well, I will show you. Decamp forthwith, both of you!"

Charley and I decamped accordingly, and betook ourselves to a very pleasant beer-garden (for this colloquy chanced to be held in Richmond), where we spent a couple of hours. On our return we found Alice sitting with dishevelled hair and looking very disconsolate.

"Where is chapter fifty-one?"

Alice pointed rather snappishly to the waste-basket, in which lay several sheets of paper, torn into shreds.

"Ah!" said I, "let us put the pieces together, Charley, and see how she got on." And Charley and I made for the basket. The result was a battle royal, at the end of which the shreds had become bits of the size of postage-stamps, mingled with which, all over the room, lay the ruins of the basket.

"You give it up, then?"

"Not for a moment," replied she, panting.

A week passed before Alice summoned us to hear her chapter read. Not with a view to criticism, however; for it was agreed that neither Charley nor I should utter one word, either of praise or censure. Whatever she produced was to be printed just as she wrote it; and here it is, word for word, just as it came from her pen.

And if any reader, during its perusal, shall come to doubt whether it be, in truth, her production; if he shall fail to discover one solitary trait of our merry-sparkling, laugh-compelling enchantress, it will be but another proof that what people are has nothing to do with what they write. If, for example, the reader shall find this work dull—but enough.

Moving nearer the lamp, Alice read with a resolute spirit but faltering voice as follows:

CHAPTER LI.

BY ALICE FROBISHER, LOVE-EDITOR.

THEY stood face to face, these two; he with outstretched hand to receive the goblet which she held.

"I'd rather help myself."

"Why? But of course, if you prefer it." And he stood aside.

She glanced at his face. "Oh, I didn't mean to be rude. Help me, then; thank you." And barely moistening her lips (for somehow a choking sensation seized her), she handed him back the tumbler.

It is in our premonitions that we women have some compensation for our inferiority in strength to men. It was not an accident that the Pythia and the Sibyl were women. The delicate, responsive fibre of her nervous system makes every woman half a prophetess.

"You must have been parched with thirst," said he, holding up the goblet, with a smile.

"I suppose it was only imagination."

Trivial words; yet he knew and she felt that a crisis in their lives was at hand. It is thus, I am told, that soldiers will often joke and babble of nothings when crouched along the frowning edge of battle.

"Only imagination," said he, catching at the words. (They were walking slowly, side by side, from the dining-room to the parlor.) "And is there anything else in life worth living for? The facts of life, what are they but dry crusts, the merest husks, which content the body, perhaps, while leaving the soul unsatisfied?"

It was to minor chords, as I have said somewhere above, that Mary's nature gave readiest response; and these had been struck with no uncertain hand.

"You speak feelingly," said she, without looking up.

"And no wonder; for of these husks of life—husks without a kernel—I have had my share; but of late—"

They had reached the parlor window and found the piazza deserted. How inconsistent is the human heart, more especially that of woman. Mary had longed to find herself alone, for one short quarter of an hour, with this man who had so troubled her peace. She had confidence in her woman's tact,—felt sure that, if opportunity were given, she could pluck away the mask which concealed his heart, without revealing her own. Strangely enough, during all the time they had been under one roof, she had not had such an opportunity. This had, in fact, been one cause of her troubled curiosity. He had seemed studiously to avoid finding himself alone with her, and with her only of all the girls. It had come now,—come so suddenly,—and she trembled. She leaned out of the window.

"They are all gone," said she, withdrawing her head and looking up at the Don with a scared look.

Was not that sinking of the heart a presage of sorrow? Would it not have been better for thee, poor child, to have hearkened to the voice of its Cassandra-throbs? Better to have hastened to the Hall, whence thou couldst even now hear issuing the sounds of merry music, and found safety in numbers? Something whispered this in her fluttering heart.

"But of late," repeated the man of her destiny.

"Let us join our friends in the Hall," said she, faintly.

Wise words, but spoken too late. Too late; for she felt herself compassed round about by a nameless spell that would not be broken; entwined in cords soft as silk but strong as fate.

"They seem to be getting on famously without us."

"Yes, but I thought—"

"Thought what?"

"I thought you must be longing to hear Lucy play." And she gave a hasty glance at his face.

There was a revelation in the look that met hers. The veil that had darkened her vision fell away. Through those glorious eyes of his, so full of tender flame, she saw into his heart of hearts; and no image of Lucy was imprinted thereon; nor had ever been. 'Twas her own, instead sat enthroned there.

Wrung as she had been, for weeks, with conflicting emotions, the revulsion of feeling that now came over her was too great for her strength. Her knees tottered beneath her; the room swam before her eyes.

"Somehow I feel a little tired," said she; and she sank down upon a sofa which stood near.

Where was all her tact gone? Was she not to unveil his heart while hiding her own?

All is fair in love and war; and in both the best-laid schemes are undone by a surprise. The enemy had found the citadel unguarded and rushed in.

"Will you allow me?" said he.

She made no reply beyond a faint smile, and he took his seat beside her.

"You spoke of music just now. Lucy has a charming touch; but I know a voice that is, to me at least, richer than all the harmonies of a symphony, softer than an *Æolian* harp, gentler than the cooing of a dove."

She made a brave effort to look unconscious. "Oh, how beautiful it must be! How I should like to hear such a voice!"

"I hear it now! I am drinking it in!"

It was a draught which seemed to intoxicate him; and the circle of the spell which bound them grew narrower. She could feel his eager, frequent breath upon her cheek, whose burning glow lent a more liquid lustre to her dark eyes. They spoke little. What need of multiplying words? Did they not know all? Ah, supremest moment of our lives, and restfullest, when two souls rush together, at last, and are one!

Somehow, by chance, just then—if things which always manage to happen can be said to come by chance—somehow their hands met. Met somewhere along the back of the sofa, perhaps—but no matter.

Hardly their hands, either. It was the forefinger tip, merely, of his right hand that chanced to rest its weight across the little finger of her left.

A taper and a soft and a dainty little finger,—and a weak, withal. Why should it scamper off before it was hurt? After all, it was but an accident, perhaps,

and a neighborly sort of accident, at the worst. Who could say that it was a bold, bad forefinger? Perhaps it did not know it was there!

And so that weak little digit lay there, still as a mouse, though blushing, blushing (ah me, how it did blush!), and all of a flutter.

After all, are not even strangers continually shaking hands? And if that be so, why should one run away, merely because—but the thing is not worth a discussion.

I have been much longer in telling it than it was in happening. The thrill had barely flashed through that rose-tipped little digit when he seized her hand, and taking it in both his, pressed it again and again to his heart; then the other; and drawing her towards him, bent over her and breathed into her ear words never to be forgotten. Not many, but strong,—vehement with long-suppressed passion.

As though a mountain-torrent had burst its bonds.

She had read of innumerable wooings and imagined many besides; but never one like this. She tried to speak, she knew not what, but her tongue refused to do its office.

“And have you no word for me? No little word of hope?”

She raised her eyes to his. It was but for a moment; for she could not longer withstand his impassioned gaze. But in that brief glance, half wondering, half shrinking, he read his answer, and in an instant she found herself enveloped in those mighty arms,—found herself lying across that broad chest, his right arm around her, his left supporting her head, that nestled with upturned face against his shoulder. With upturned face and closed eyes.

She had surrendered at discretion. When she felt herself, again and again, pressed to his heart, she made no protest;—gave no sign when he devoured her cheeks, her lips, with kisses, countless, vehement-tender,—lay upon that broad shoulder in a kind of swoon.

She had waited so long and it had come so suddenly, this cyclone of love!

Lay there upon that broad chest,—she so little,—

with upturned face but closed lids, from beneath which forced their way drop after drop of happy tears. Happy tears? Did not they too tremble, tremble, as they lingered, waiting to be kissed away?

Lay there, nestled upon that strong arm, and drunk with the wine of young love; the past forgot, the future banished,—living in the present alone. A present, delicious, dreamy, and wrapped in rose-colored incense-breathing mist. Shutting out all the world save only him and her. From afar comes floating to her ear, from the Hall, the sound of muffled laughter,—comes floating the drowsy tinkling of the piano, meaningless and inane! All things else are shams. Love alone is real!

Yes, pillow thy head upon that arm, thy heart upon that hope, while yet thou mayest!

For dost not heed how within that deep chest, against which thy fair young bosom palpitates and flutters,—markest thou not how 'tis a lion-heart seems to beat therein? To beat thereunder with tempestuous thud, ominous of storm and wreck?

And those eyes, so wondrous tender now, and soft (for even if thou hast not stolen a look between thy dewy lids, thou hast felt their caressing glances), and those loving eyes? Hast forgotten how their changeful, bickering flashes once filled thy heart with dread, even before he was aught to thee?

If thou hast, dream on—dream on while thou mayest!

CHAPTER LII.

WITH the last word Alice dropped the manuscript on the table, and hastily left the room. Charley shot forth, with a vigorous puff, a ring of heroic proportions.

“Upon my word, Jack, I didn’t think it was in the old girl! Capital! It is, by Jove!”

“Capital,” said I.

"Yes," said he, "it is. But, I say, Jack—"

"What?" said I, with some expectancy, for he had lowered his voice to a confidential whisper.

"It is very clever in the old girl, and all that, you know. Jove! didn't she hit out on a high line? 'Incense-breathing mist,'—how does that strike you, Hein? And 'tempestuous thud?'—what have you got to say to that? And 'bickering eyes?' But I say, Jack—Whack, old boy—"

"Well?"

"I say, you won't tell her what I am going to say?"

"Of course not."

"Well, I won't deny that it is well written, and in a high, romantic vein; but—now you won't tell her?—but before I would have it thought that *I* wrote that chapter, you might shoot me with a brass-barrelled pistol."

With that he took up the manuscript, and began running his eye over it and reading aloud passages here and there. We both (I am ashamed to say) soon got to laughing, and Charley at last went off into an almost hysterical state, the tears streaming down his cheeks. Just then Alice suddenly re-appeared, and his features snapped together like a steel trap. Charley, in point of fact, was not laughing at his wife, but rather at the inherent absurdity of all love-scenes; but he felt guilty when she entered the room, and looked preternaturally solemn.

"What is the matter?" asked Alice.

"I thought it was agreed that there were to be no criticisms?"

"Yes; but you and Jack have been criticising my chapter already."

"In your absence, of course."

"And I heard you laughing."

"Laughing? What do you suppose there was to laugh at? In point of fact, I said it was capital; didn't I, Jack?"

"Yes; and I agreed with him."

"Really?" asked she, looking from one to the other of us with keen suspicion in her eyes.

"Yes; honestly, my dear, it does you credit."

Alice looked pleased.

"Of course, however, any one could tell, at a glance, that it was from a woman's pen."

"I don't see why," said she, bridling. "So far from that being the case, I'll bet you a box of gloves that when the book comes out, the critics will say that not one line of it was written by me, and that I am a purely mythical personage, invented out of the whole cloth."

"Done," said he; "they will say nothing of the kind. By the way, can you tell me, Alice, why it is that women always put so much hugging and kissing in their books?"

"I believe they do," said Alice, laughing.

"Jack would not have dared to make that chapter so—so—warm, in fact. Why, it took away my breath, the brisk way in which you enveloped Mary in the Don's arms. Jack could not have brought about such a consummation in less than three chapters."

"So much the worse for Jack. It was human nature, —woman's nature, at any rate."

"Oho! live and learn, Jack!"

"I am taking notes."

"And *act* on them," rejoined Alice, with a rather malicious allusion to certain recent incidents in my own personal career. "Women like *aggressive* lovers; so next time—"

"But really, Alice," said Charley, coming to my rescue, "that chapter of yours—such as it is,—now no offence,—I mean giving, as it does, a love-passage from a woman's point of view, is very well done. And one thing, Jack, seems to me especially to be commended. It is positively artistic, the way in which she contrives to cast a shadow upon the pair, as they sit basking in the sunshine of—ah—in fact—sunshine of young love—ahem—match, Jack—thank you—ahem." Charley reddened a little, conscious of having been betrayed into an unwonted burst of eloquence. "And very cleverly indeed," added he, "that shadow is wrought by the very flash of light which will give our readers a

momentary glimpse of certain lines in the nature of poor Dory, which you had not previously brought out."

"*Inexorabilis acer*," said I, musing.

"Oh, yes," said Alice, turning to her husband; "how often have I heard you apply those words to your poor friend. They are not to be found—in—Virgil? At any rate, I cannot recall such a passage."

"No; they are part of a verse in which Horace gives a characterization of Achilles."

CHAPTER LIII.

I HAVE said that Mary was romantic; and I don't know that I could give any clearer proof of the fact than this: as she lay sleepless that night, reviewing the scenes and events of the last few months, and more especially of the preceding day,—as she lay there silently pondering, and realized that she knew nothing of the history, and was far from sure that she knew even the name of the man to whom she had so thoroughly committed herself,—she felt no wish that matters stood otherwise. Nay, she even found herself rejoicing in the cloud of mystery that surrounded her lover; and, to tell the truth, it was with a feeling of relief that she had heard the sound of footsteps and the hum of voices, the day before, announcing the return from the Hall, just as she had gathered from the Don's manner that he was on the verge of a revelation. But they had been interrupted, and she had, for one more day, at least, the privilege—a delicious one to a girl of her temperament—of allowing her imagination, unshackled by hard fact, to play around this strangely interesting man, who had shot like a meteor athwart her path. Singularly enough,—or it would have been strange, did we not all know the confidence without reserve which a woman ever places in the man to whom she has given her heart,—strangely enough, Mary felt not the slightest misgiving on the score of

the revelation she had reason to look for on the morrow. She had not the least dread that that revelation might prove of such a character as to make imperative an instant breaking off of relations with the Don. What she dreaded was the dispersal of her illusions, the end of her sweet dreams. To-day she could imagine—to-morrow she would know.

And so, next day, when our friends sallied forth for a walk, and it fell out, partly through the manœuvring of Alice, that Mary and the Don began to be farther and farther isolated from the rest, her heart began to beat so quick and hard that utterance became difficult. Her companion, too, seemed preoccupied, and their conversation became a tissue of the baldest commonplace. At last he stood still, and with eyes fixed upon the ground, was silent,—silent for an age, as it seemed to Mary. At last he looked up.

"Mary," he began,—it was the first time he had ever addressed her thus, and her heart gave a quick beat of pleasure,—“Mary, there is something I must say to you, and we could not find a better opportunity. There is the Argo; let us take seats in it.”

She assented in silence and with a sudden sinking of the heart; for there rushed before her mind, in tumultuous throng, all the dreadful possibilities of the coming revelation.

“Is not this,” said she, as she took her seat upon one of the benches, “the first visit that you and I have made to the ‘Fateful’?”

“‘The Fateful,’” she repeated to herself. Was the name ominous? And she strove to hide, beneath a careless smile, the deep agitation that she felt. “Do you know, I feel that I have a right to quarrel with you? For I alone of all the girls have never been honored by you with an invitation to visit the Argo. It almost looks like an intentional slight. Was it?”

She was talking at random, hardly knowing what she said; anxious only to put off for a few brief moments the explanation which she had suddenly begun to look upon with genuine terror.

It is thus that, when, with swollen cheek, we have

taken our seat in his elaborate chair, we strive to delay the pitiless dentist (while he, adamant soul, selects from his jingling store the instrument most diabolically suited to our case), happy with a happiness all too briefly bright, if he will but turn and admit that the day is fine. [Jack's mocking pencil, again! I protest. *Alice.*]

"Yes, it was intentional."

She looked up.

"Well, not a slight, of course, but intentional."

"Why? I cannot imagine." But she did imagine why, though but vaguely.

"Ah! I am glad you ask that question. It enables me to begin."

But he did not begin. He knit his brows instead, and fixed his eyes in perplexity upon the shining sand.

"I hardly know what to say to you."

"Then don't say anything," exclaimed she, eagerly.

"Don't say anything?"

"Well, not about *that*!"

"About *that*?"

"Well, you know—"

"Yes, I dare say we are both thinking about the same thing."

"'Great minds will,' etc., you know—"

"Say loving hearts." And he took her hand. "Yes, I admit that I have studiously avoided finding myself alone with you."

"Were you afraid of me? I am very little!"

"I was afraid of myself; yesterday proved how justly so."

"Do you regret yesterday?"

"I am afraid I do not. But I ought to. I had no right to tell you I loved you."

"It is an inalienable right of every man to tell his love."

"At any rate, I beg your pardon for having spoken mine."

"I find forgiveness amazingly easy," said she, laughing. Then, seriously, "Indeed, your scruples are over-nice. The sweetest music that can fall on the ear of a

woman is, as Alice says, loving words. Why should we be denied it? What else have we to live for?"

"But I owe it to you—"

"You owe me nothing!" exclaimed she, hastily.

"But I wish to tell you—"

"Tell me nothing! I know what you wish to say, but you shall not say it,—not yet, at least."

He smiled.

"No; I see you before me, hear your voice; I have known you, such as you are, for months. I wish to know no more, just now. Let me dream on; do not awaken me. Let me float on," she continued, realistically clasping the gunwale of the *Argo*, "over rose-tipped waves, careless what shores lie beyond. Let me dream yet a little longer." And rising from her seat, she dropped on one knee in front of him, and bringing her two hands together, placed them within his. "Not one word. I trust you; I am *satisfied*," said she, with a voice low yet ringing, ringing with proud enthusiasm,—a voice full of strange thrills, vibrating, eloquent. This, her speaking attitude, and the impassioned faith that illumined her eyes, fired his breast with an indescribable glow of ecstasy. Pressing her hands between his and raising his eyes, he exclaimed with a fervor that was almost religious,—

"Adorable Mary! I have dreamed dreams, I have seen visions, but none could compare with this!"

The exaltation of his voice, the spiritual glory of his upturned eyes, the sudden burst of fervor, the overmastering force of his impetuous manhood, hurried Mary's imagination to giddy heights. She could have fallen down and worshipped him.

"Come," said he, more gently; "take that seat and listen to me for a moment."

She made as though she would place two fingers on his lips.

"No!" said he (placing his lips on the two fingers). "Since you wish it, I will leave unsaid what I purposed saying. It is a strange whim on your part, but an altogether charming one to me, since it gives me the right to believe that you value me for myself alone. I

shall, therefore, respect this fancy of yours as long as you desire. But if I may not tell you who I am, I may at least say what I am not. I am not an adventurer. You toss your head; your faith is lovely, but you know I might have been one. No? Well, at any rate, I am not. I am, in fact, your equal in social position; so that, if you can spare a place for me in your heart, without knowing who I am, you will not have to expel me when you condescend to hear what I have to say."

"Do you know," said Mary, with a merry twinkle in her eyes, "I believe you are just dying to tell me all about yourself?"

"And you wild to have me do so."

The sun sparkled upon the River, the waves murmured softly at their feet, beneath a gentle breeze laden with the mysterious breath of awakening spring; and these two sat there bantering one another, like children, gleefully. Mary no longer recognized the man who sat before her. Every line had passed from his face; and but for his Olympic beard, he might have seemed a great jolly boy just come home for his holidays. She could not take her eyes off his face. She was scrutinizing it, wondering where could be lurking those ambuscades of passion that she thought she had detected more than once. And the fire-darting flashes, where were they hidden, beneath those ingenuous glances, so tender, so soft, so caressing?

CHAPTER LIV.

To four people at Elmington that was a happy week. I suspect it was rather a dull one to every one else.

The friendship of Alice and Mary had renewed its youth. Each had told the other everything. That is, they did what they could; for there was always no end left to tell. Not a word was wasted, not a moment spent on any subject but one. Never had two young men been more talked about.

"We are both so well suited," said Alice. "To a matter-of-fact body like me, Mr. Frobisher—"

"Oh, Alice, he is just too charming, with his quaint, humorous ways; and then so devoted!"

"Do you *think* so?"

"Why, the poor man is *just dying* with love, and—"

"But just think of your affair, Mary! *When* are you going to let him tell you who he is? Oh, I'll tell you. Suppose we let them both come up to Richmond at the same time to interview our respective and respected papas. Oh, won't it be *dreadful*!" And with that they fell on each other's necks and giggled.

"Mr. Frobisher says he will be hanged if he speaks to my father. He says he thinks it a liberty to ask any man for his daughter; so he intends to speak to mother. Bashful? O-o-o-oh!"

Charley and the Don, too, had their confabulations, but how was any one to find out what they said? But a merrier, jollier soul than the latter it would have been hard to find. (I believe my grandfather would have been somewhat scandalized at the way he profaned the Guarnerius with his jigs, had not Charley made casual mention of the *gigas* of Corelli and the old Italian school; which seemed to lend a certain air of classicity to their homely Virginia descendants.)

These four, then, were happy. But upon the horizon of Mary's dreams there hung a speck of cloud. It was no bigger than a man's hand, but its jagged edges, splotching the rosy east, marred the perfection of the dawn.

To say what that cloud was, brings up a subject upon which I touch with extreme reluctance.

A Bushwhacker discussing the problems of religion, —what will be said of him? Love—feeling my inability to depict that, I accepted the kind offices of our friend Alice. But where, among the bishops and other clergy—regular officers,—am I to find one willing to be associated with a guerilla like myself? Who among them would write a few chapters for this book?

But the chapters must be written.

The reader will recall, I beg, one of the earlier inci-

dents recorded in this narrative; where the writer calls upon the Don at his rooms in Richmond, to invite him to spend Christmas at Elmington. It will be remembered that I found him reading a small book, which he laid down upon my entrance, and that chancing to glance at the little volume as I passed out of the room, I saw with surprise that it was a copy of the New Testament. With surprise. I would not be understood (not for the world) as casting a slur upon the youth of Virginia. They read their Bibles, of course; but generally, I believe, at the beginning and end of the day. At any rate, whether it was the hour of the evening or the man himself, I was astonished.

When I told the girls what I had seen, they were variously affected, according to their several natures. Here, thought Lucy, is one more good young man,—good not being, with her, a term of contempt. Mary's imagination was fired. Behold, thought she, a high, brave young spirit that hath chosen the better part. Alice, being what neither of the others was, in the main an average Virginia girl,—Alice could not help it,—the little scamp laughed. I don't know that it occurred to her that these very good young men are, take them "by and large," no better than the bad young men (and not half so interesting); all I know is that she laughed, and made the others laugh, too, though against their will.

And not once only. For weeks afterwards she never spoke of the Don save as Parson (or, rather, Pass'n) Smith. Her merry fancy played countless variations upon this single string; but it snapped one day,—snapped very suddenly, the first Sunday after her and Mary's arrival at Elmington.

"I wonder," said Alice, as she and the other girls were getting ready for church,—*"I wonder whether the Pass'n will go with us? Has any one heard him inquiring about a meeting-house? What a favorite he would be among the sistern of the county!"*

As they went down-stairs, they could see him leaning against a pillar on the porch.

"Look, Mary; your Pass'n has his Sunday face on."

How dreadfully serious he looks! Mind, girls, no frivolity! I'll be bound he says 'Sabbath.'"

"No gentleman ever speaks of Sunday as 'the Sabbath,'" said Mary, reproachfully.

"Very true; and he is a gentleman if he is a pass'n. Oh, this glove! Mr. Whacker," she continued, "here we are; and all ready, for a wonder, in time."

Wheels were crunching along up to the steps; horses, held by boys, were pawing the earth; and on the piazza there was the rustle of dresses and the subdued hum of preparation. The Don alone seemed to have no part in the proceedings. Alice drew two girls' heads together.

"The exhorter looks solemn! The drive will be hilarious in the carriage that takes *him*! Listen!"

"By the way," Mr. Whacker was saying, "I had forgotten to ask you,—will you take a seat in the carriage, or would you prefer going on horseback?"

"Horseback, by all means," whispered Alice; "the jolting might cheer up his Riverence."

The Don, looking down, changed color, and was visibly embarrassed. "I remember," said he, presently, raising his eyes to those of Mr. Whacker, "that one of the first things you said to me, when you welcomed me to Elmington, was that it was 'Liberty Hall.'"

"Certainly, oh, certainly," rejoined my grandfather, in his cordial way. "Choose for yourself. That pair of thoroughbreds may look a trifle light; but you will find they will take you spinning. Then there is the buggy. But perhaps you would prefer to ride? I can recommend that sorrel that Zip is holding." (Zip gave a furtive pressure on the curb which made the sorrel arch his neck and paw the ground.)

"I have not made myself clear," said the Don, with a constrained smile. "I meant to beg you to—to let me take care of 'Liberty Hall' to-day."

"You mean," said my grandfather, taking in the idea with some difficulty, "that you do not wish to go to church to-day?"

The Don bowed.

"Oh, certainly," said Mr. Whacker, with some eager-

ness; for he felt that he had inadvertently pressed his guest beyond the limits of good breeding. "Certainly, of course, I had not thought of it. Of course you have not yet quite recovered your strength."

The Don bowed his head deferentially, as though willing to let this explanation of his host pass unchallenged; but a certain something that lurked beneath his rather mechanical smile showed that that explanation was Mr. Whacker's, not his. A sudden constraint came over the company, and they were glad to get off.

When the party returned, the Don was absent, walking; and when, at dinner, there was the usual rambling discussion of the sermon, the singing, and so forth, he took no part in the conversation. The next Sunday, when the vehicles and horses came up to the door, the Don was found to be missing; having absented himself purposely, as seemed likely; and so on the next Sunday—and on the next—to the end.

It was remarked, too, that never once did he take part in those innocent little theological discussions which are apt to spring up in Virginia homes, around the family hearth, after tea, Sunday evenings. As he was not a talker, as a rule, his silence would not have been obtrusive, save for his persistency in maintaining it. As it was, in the end his very silence seemed a sort of crying aloud. Alice had called him "Pass'n" for the last time.

All this gave Mary, for reasons of her own, great concern,—far greater concern than an average girl would have felt. What those reasons were I shall explain at the proper time. Suffice it to say at present, that just in proportion as her interest in this singular man deepened did her anxiety as to his religious views grow keener. The time had come, at last, when she felt that she had the right to question him; but the very thought (though ever in her mind) of asking him why he never went to church made her shiver. Strange! Now that he was her avowed lover, her awe of him was greater than ever before. He was now frank, joyous, playful—

- But even when a caged lion is romping with his mate, you shall ofttimes see the glitter of his mighty teeth!

CHAPTER LV.

Mr grandfather was looking serious. Mr. Carter had come down from Richmond, and, next day, the great American Undulator and Boneless Vertebrate was to leave Elmington, taking with her Alice and Mary; and these notable Christmas holidays would come to an end.

It was late in the afternoon of one of those delicious days in February, which every year (in the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave) delude us with the hope of an early spring (though we all know that we never have any spring, late or early); deceiving even yonder pair of bluebirds, who, warmed into forgetfulness of that March which lies between them and the abundant and nutritious worm of summer, go gallivanting up and down the orchard, chirruping eternal fidelity; peering into this old tree and into that, in quest of some hollow knot, so suggestive (to the bluebirdish mind) of matrimony.

Where Charley and Alice were on this bright afternoon does not much matter. No doubt they were together and happy; or, if wretched, wretched with that sweet wretchedness which makes the tearful partings of young lovers so truly delicious.

There's your Araminta. Nineteen years of her life had she passed, ignorant of your existence. T'other day you met; and now, she who gave you not so much as a sigh during all those nineteen years, cannot bear you speak of a month's absence but she distils upon your collar the briny tear! She has found out during the last few days, your Araminta, that she cannot breathe where you are not.

Absurd Araminta—but nice?

Wherever else they may have been, they were not in

the Argo. The Don and Mary were there; and in the then infancy of naval architecture row-boats were not built large enough to hold, comfortably, two pairs of lovers.

Mary was seated in the boat, he lounging around it; now leaning against the gunwale, now stalking idly to and fro in the shining sand, rejoicing in his youth. They talked of the passing sea-gulls, the twittering bluebirds, the rippling waves, the rosy clouds, the generous sunlight,—of everything, of nothing, it mattered not; for love hath power to transfigure the plainest things.

Presently the Don said, standing with fingers interlaced behind his back, and looking far away down the River, "Do you know, it would be hard for me to live at a spot remote from salt water? All the great thoughts that have moved the world have arisen within sound of the sea-waves. She is the mother of civilization. It is the land which separates the peoples of the earth, not the water. It thrills me to think that, as I stand here, this river which splashes against my foot is part of that ocean which washes the shores of England, of France, of Italy, of Greece, of Palestine."

Palestine! Strange word on the lips of a man who never went to church.

"Then, again," continued he, with a smile, "I love the sea because it reminds me—I don't mind telling you, since I have let you into my little secret—because it reminds me of Homer, and the epithets he has applied to it."

"Ah, that reminds *me* of something! Have you forgotten your promise to talk to me about Homer? Have you that little copy of the Iliad in your pocket now?"

"Of course," said he, tapping his vest.

"Will you not let me have it in my hand *now*?"

He shook his head, smiling. "No; but have you not the right to command me now? Speak, and I obey!"

"Ah! Then I command you, on your allegiance, to deliver that book into my hands."

He hesitated for a moment, and his hand shook a

little when he placed the book in hers. She took the left lid between finger and thumb; but his look of ill-suppressed agitation made her hesitate, and *her* hand began to tremble now, she knew not why.

"May I look?" she asked, in a rather shaky voice.

"If you will! But I warn you that that fly-leaf will tell you what you have forbidden me to reveal."

"Oh!" cried she, with a start. And the book fell upon the shining sand.

He stooped and picked it up. "Have you had enough of it?"

"More than enough,—for the present, at least," she replied, smiling faintly. "However," she added, "I should like to look at the outside of it. How very old it looks," said she, as she took it in her hand. "Why, the corners are worn perfectly round; you must know it all by heart."

"Almost," said he.

"And the back—what!" exclaimed she, with astonishment. "Why, this is not the Iliad! It is a copy of the New Testament!" And she held up the faded title before his eyes.

With a black look of annoyance, but without a word, the Don seized the book, thrust it into his pocket, and began striding to and fro. Presently he stopped in front of her.

"I put my hand into the wrong pocket," said he, with obvious vexation.

"Why, yes. But what's the harm?" said she, in a soothing voice. "Carrying a Testament in one's pocket is nothing to be ashamed of, I hope?"

"Certainly not! But," he added, with a half smile, "taking it out is different."

"And so," she began, feeling her way, "you carry the Iliad in one pocket and the Testament in the other." But it was not now of the Iliad that she wished to hear him talk.

"Yes; a rather ill-assorted couple, you would say?"

"Very! One might suppose you either a—Greek professor in disguise—or—a—minister."

He threw his head back and laughed. "I never

thought of that; so one might. We generally look too deep for motives. Truth is not often found in the bottom of a well. I carry these two books simply because—”

She looked up.

“Because,” he added, gravely, “they were given to me by—people that I—cared for.”

Constituted as she was, these few words affected Mary strongly. He had said so little, yet so much; revealing, in the unconscious simplicity of his nature, the very intensity of feeling that he strove to hide. And as she looked upon the two little volumes that he had carried all these years, saw how they had been worn away against his heart, a feeling of awe came over her. She found herself comparing, in her imaginative way, the man before her with one of the great, silent powers of nature,—the dark-floating tide, for instance, so noiseless when unresisted; or a black cloud charged with thunder, that seems, at first, but to mutter in its sleep, like a Cyclops in a battle-dream, but when yonder mountain dares to rear his crest in its path—

“You value them very highly on account of the givers,” put in Mary, as an entering wedge.

“Naturally; but not exclusively on that account.” And he drew the two little volumes from his pockets, and, placing them side by side, surveyed them lovingly.

Here was Mary’s opportunity. Painfully anxious as she had been as to her lover’s religious convictions, she had shrunk, hitherto, from a direct question. But it would be easy now, she saw, to lead him on to a full confession of his faith without seeming to interrogate him.

She began by drawing him out on Homer; but what he said she hardly heard, so tremulously eager was she to know what he thought of that other little book which he held in his hand. One thing struck her at the time, and she had cause to remember it afterwards: the strong admiration he evinced for the character of Achilles, the flinty-hearted captain of the Myrmidons.

Presently she said, in a low voice, "You hold them side by side; but could two books be more different?"

He laid the Iliad upon the seat beside him, and taking the other little volume in his hand, held it up before him. As he did so, there was something in his look that thrilled her with expectancy. While he had been indicating the clear-cut outlines of Homer's marvellous creation, she had felt (though hardly hearing with more than her outward ear) that he spoke admirably, and remarked the high intellectuality that illumined his features; but now a sudden glow suffused his countenance, and strange, soft lights danced in his eyes. She hung upon his opening lips with deep suspense; for something told her that upon the words he was about to utter her own happiness depended.

The hour that followed was passed in a way which is probably rare with parting lovers.

* * * * *

"No, I have never read Chateaubriand's *Genie du Christianisme*, and," added he, with an admiring glance, "I am glad of it; for otherwise I should not have heard your brilliant version of what he says. I am afraid, however, that, well as he puts it, I am hardly frank enough to admit that parts of the Old Testament are superior, as mere literature, to everything that the Greeks have left us. The truth is, however, that I know so little of the Old Testament that I have no right to an opinion; but this little book," continued he, holding it up, "I know by heart. I mean the gospels," he added, quickly; "and I don't hesitate to say that in all literature you shall not find such a gem."

The gospels a gem of literature! A weight seemed to press on Mary's heart.

"Listen!" And he opened the book, and turning a few pages with nervous eagerness, found a passage. "Listen! Could anything be more beautiful?"

His lips parted; but, without reading a word, he closed the volume upon his forefinger. "Pardon me; but do you know, I fear you can hardly have more than

a suspicion of how divinely beautiful this little book really is?"

She looked up, puzzled.

"You have heard it read, week after week, it is true, but read with a saintly snivel,—a holy whine."

Mary would have protested, but a certain dark flash of bitter disdain that accompanied these words checked her; and she was silent.

"Let me read you," said he, after a pause, "a few of my favorite passages, in the voice of a mere man."

He read and commented, commented and read, for perhaps an hour; commented without rhetoric, read without art. He merely gave himself up to that wondrous story.

And what an hour for Mary! For weeks she had longed to know what he thought upon the one great subject which overshadowed all others in her mind. Yes, overshadowed,—for hers was not a blithe spirit. Had longed to know, yet feared to ask. And now that he had been reading and talking so long, did he—as she had so often and so fervently prayed that he should—did he think as she did? Alas, it was but too clear that he did not! But what did he think? That she could not tell, so strange and bewildering were the flashes that came from his words. Her Virginia theology gave her no clue. As though a mariner bore down upon a coast not to be found upon his chart: the lights are there, but have no meaning for him.

Equally bewildered was Mary. How did he regard the central figure of that wondrous drama? As he read and talked and talked and read, a will-o'-the-wisp danced before her eyes, leading her here, there, everywhere, but not to be seized!

How tender his voice now! borrowing pathos not from art, but from the narrative itself. A voice full of tears. And do not his eyes answer the fading sunlight with a dewy shimmer?

He was right, she thought, when he said she knew not the beauties of this little book. Not a month ago, and she had dozed under this very passage.

And now there rose before her—he read on but she

heard him not (so the trooping fancies evoked by music have power to dull the mere outward ear)—rose before her soul a vision of ineffable softness,—a vision of one with a face full of sorrow, but a sun-lit head; and he beckoned to little children, and they followed him; and as he passed, the burdens of the heavy-laden grew lighter, and the weary smiled again and forgot their weariness, and rose and followed, they too. And as he passed (he read on but she heeded not)—as he passed along his stony path, violets seemed to spring from beneath his feet,—violets shedding perfume. And along the roadside lilies nodded. And sinners beat their breasts, but lifted up their hearts. And one of her own sex followed,—one who had loved much; and as she followed she dried her tears with her sunny hair—

“GENERATION OF VIPERS!”

She started from her seat and clutched the gunwale of the boat. As he towered above her, his nostrils breathed defiance, his white teeth glittered with scorn, his dark eyes gleamed, his whole figure was eloquent with indignation. 'Twas but a bunch of dry sea-weed that he held aloft, crushed in his right hand; but to her he seemed to brandish the serpent-thongs of Tisiphone; and the milksop ideal of Raphael and the rest vanished from her mind. In its stead there rose before her exalted imagination the heroic figure of a valiant young Jew. He stands before a mob that thirsts for his blood. Alone, but intrepid. He knows full well, O Jerusalem, that thou dost stone thy prophets (for what land doth not?), but though his face be pale beneath the shadow of approaching death, his brave spirit is undaunted. He is willing that the cup shall pass from him; but, being such as he is, he may turn neither to the right nor to the left. If he must drain it, then be it so. His mission is to live for man—and, if need be, to die for him.

But is this the vision of a manlike God? Is it not rather that of a godlike man?

The Argo stands firm in its bed of shining sand; but tempest-tossed is the soul of the young girl who sits

therein, straining her eager eyes for a sight of land. Every now and then a glorious mirage seems to spring into the air, gladdening, for a moment, the darkening horizon, and then to fall as suddenly, dispersed by a word.

"Yes, Rousseau was right; Socrates did die like a philosopher, but Jesus like a God!"

Mary leaned forward and held her breath.

He clasped his hands, and uplifting his face that was pale with emotion: "My God," cried he, in a voice that made her shiver—"my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The mirage vanished,—for a mere tone may outline a whole system of theology. That cry, as he gave it, was one of bitter human anguish. In her lover's eyes 'twas not a God that died, but a man,—godlike, but a man.

"With that cry" (he added), "the bitterest that ever broke from mortal lips—"

She heard but heeded not; she knew more than enough already.

"With that cry there burst the grandest heart that ever beat for mankind. Who can wonder that sixty generations of men have worshipped him as a God!"

Mary rose, and, descending from the Argo, took his arm. She needed its support.

Just before reaching the piazza, she stopped suddenly, and, wheeling in front of him, fixed her gaze upon his face. A gaze long, wistful, pitiful-tender. As though a mother learned by heart the features of her boy just going forth to battle, not knowing what may happen.

She tried to answer the smile that greeted this burst of feminine impulse; but the soulful eyes were swimming with tears.

The Pythia was a woman—and Cassandra—

CHAPTER LVI.

I PICTURE thee to my fancy, my Ah Yung Whack, popping thine almond eyes out of all almond shape. No? Then thou hast not read my last chapter. Couldst not? Ah, but thou must. I felt that it would be so much Choctaw to thee. Still, thou must read it; for in that chapter I strike the key-note of this, my Symphonic Monograph.

I know it is Choctaw to thee; nay, Comanche; but I rejoice, rather, in that; for it gives me a pretext for writing an entire chapter for thine enlightenment. Nor exclusively for thine; for I would make matters clear for the contemporary reader, who will, I trust (or else alas for my poor publishers!),—who will, I trust, outnumber thee.

This, then, is my case. I have thrown upon my canvas a young person who has had the misfortune to fall in love with a man of whom she may be fairly said to know nothing. (Her feminine intuitions cannot, of course, pass muster as knowledge with us Bushwhackers and philosophers.) And this young person, so far as is made to appear, is anxious to know but one thing in regard to her lover. Had she been a good sensible girl, with no nonsense about her, it might have been supposed that she would have been curious to know whether he were rich. Then, being but just turned of eighteen, who could have blamed her if she had wondered whether he were of a jealous temper, and likely to put an end to her dancing with other men? Again; many women have a pardonable ambition to shine in the eyes of their friends; and was he, if rich, generous as well? And was she likely to dazzle Alice with her diamonds, perhaps, or beam upon Lucy from a handsome equipage? He had shown, too, some fondness for field sports, and would he—ah, would he (harrowing thought to every truly feminine bosom)—would he bring her into the country, there to drag out

a weary, dreary life, and shoppinglessly vegetate? Nay, was this splendid creature (as is too often the case with splendid creatures), was he, perhaps, a slave to creature comforts? Would he be an exacting critic of her housekeeping? Might not muddy coffee exacerbate even an heroic soul? Could it be that a roast not done to a turn might corrugate that admirable brow?

No; we have not painted her as anxious in respect to any of these things. Yet I beg the reader will not accuse me of drawing a monstrosity of a girl, one destitute of the common instincts of her sex. Far from it. She, very likely, trusting implicitly to her intuitions (as women will), felt too confident as to these possibilities of her future to give them a second thought. Besides, was she not desperately in love? And we all know (or, at least, *I* believe, which amounts to the same thing, so far as this book is concerned) that there are women who, if but deeply enamoured, would scorn such thoughts, as a degradation to true love. At any rate, the fact was as I have stated it. Mary, while seemingly careless (though that may have been due to confidence) as to the mere details of her destiny in this world, was morbidly solicitous touching her lover's views as to the next.

Laugh not, gentle reader. True, I am a humoristic Bushwhacker by trade; but I would not have you smile out of order. And as for thee, my great-to-the-tenth-power-grandson, brush the wrinkles from thy yellow brow, lest thou crack, not this nut, but thine addled pate, instead.

Know, then, all men (and by all men I mean, of course, all women and clergymen, who, alone, in these busy days, have leisure to read symphonic monographs)—

Know, all women and clergymen, of this and more or less future generations, that the story I am telling has very narrow limitations, as well in time as in space. It is of Virginia* alone that I am writing. Of Virginia *not* in the fourth quarter, but Virginia in the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century.

* Conspicuously inexact; but the reader must judge for herself.—*Ed.*

Strolling through this narrow field, at this particular harvest-time, I have selected three sheaves wherewith to fashion such rural picture as my hand should have cunning to form.

Lucy, I chose, originally, as symbolizing the purity and simplicity of the womanhood of our old Virginia life. But of her I am conscious that I have given the merest outline; and I find that I cannot fill in the picture adequately, and at the same time maintain the rigidly monographic type of my work. Let her stand, therefore, just outside of our central group (where the full light falls), illumining the half-shadow with her gentle, St. Cecilia look. Is that a smile that lights her eye, or is it the glancing of a tear?

Our Alice illustrates for us, as I have said elsewhere, the careless freedom of those old days, and shows how our democratic-aristocratic Virginia girls could be gay without being indiscreet, joyous yet not loud, unconventional yet full of real dignity; how, in the hundreds of years that separate them from the mother-country, they have shaken off English stiffness, while clinging fast to English love of liberty. But she is fully capable of speaking for herself; and we pass on to Mary Rolfe.

The reader has already, I hope, a tolerably clear conception of this young person. Stature below the average, eyes full of soul, a manner painfully shy with strangers, childlike and confiding with intimates; a mind admirably stored, considering her years, with all that can adorn; often silent, and preferring to hear rather than to be heard, but murmuring, when, forgetting her reserve, she does speak, like a brook, and in a voice of such surpassing sweetness that one could have wished that, like the brook, she would go on forever. Eloquent rather than witty. And I fear few would have called her wise. For the rest, full of high imaginings, and a born hero-worshipper.

Such was Mary Rolfe in herself; and to know her as such has sufficed for the reader, so far. But a crisis is approaching in Mary's life; and to foretell how people are going to act in crises, it is not enough to know what they are in themselves, merely. What they are

is something; the where and the when are more. Do you see that pleasant, genial-looking man walking along the streets of a Southern city? Could anything be gentler than his look, kinder than his eye? Yet it was but the other day that he went out, deliberately, to a secluded spot called the Field of Honor, and sent a ball through the person of an excellent gentleman, who at the same time was addressing a bullet to his care. These worthy persons were no worse than other people (true, they were editors), but they lived in the South. That was the trouble. In the North the same man would have simply said, *you're another*, and called the account square. And I, for one, applaud the North, and say she is right and the South wrong.

No; if you would forecast the actions of men, you must be acquainted with their environment, as Herbert Spencer would call it. To use an illustration that this leader of modern scientific thought would not object to; you strike that white ball with your cue. The table being smooth, it would seem that it would maintain its initial direction till the initial force was exhausted, or at least till it struck the opposite cushion; but, lo! it strikes a light red ball that lies in its path, and off it flies at a tangent. If Mr. Spencer held the cue and were conducting the experiment in person, our illustration would now be at an end (for I am told that he is the worst billiard-player in all England); but let us suppose that that cue-thrust was delivered by one of those solid-headed young men (in shirt-sleeves) who delight in what they humorously call the scientific game. The white strikes the light red and darts away; but click! and off it speeds along a different track. It has carromed on the dark red.

And are we not, we mortals, so many billiard-balls, launched forth upon our little arena by we know not what force, and rolling we know not whither? It may be a little wider or a trifle narrower, perhaps, the stage on which we play our several parts; but all the same, around it rise the unscalable barriers of human life, the adamantine limitations of human endeavor. And we, embracing within our little selves (as did the tusk

whence that ball was cut) countless conflicting forces, the inextricably intermingled traits, that is, of numberless ancestors,—fashioned, too, by the loving hands of father, mother, brother, sister, teacher; we spin forth on the journey of life. And a seemly roll of it we may have, and a safe, perhaps, if we be but smooth and round and mediocre (not bulging on this side, say, with big thoughts, or jagged on that with untamable conscience). There stands the goal, and making for it, merrily we spin forth,—but, click! click! and where are we? Nay, may not a pinch of cigar-ashes wrest victory from an expert? And hath not, sometime, a mere rumpled thread sufficed to bring triumph to a tyro? Surely it is not a great matter to stoop and pick up a pin; but was it not enough, once, as we are told, to make a beggar a millionaire? And who shall say that the merest casual fly, alighting on the intent nose of some gunner in beleaguered Toulon, might not have so warped the parabola of a shell as to have rendered needless the slaughter of Waterloo?

I have made life a parallelogram, I see, though it is notoriously a circle; and I have symbolized failure in life by carroming on the light and dark reds; whereas, as we all know, that is success in billiards. But, my Ah Yung Whack, is it not night in China when it is day with us? And does not white raiment signify grief there? And do they not take off their shoes instead of their hats when calling on a friend, and shake their own hands rather than the other fellow's? We will let the illustration stand, my boy, for your sake; for, in the new Flowery Kingdom which is coming, all things will be changed. In that day, when the wielder of the cue shall also wear one (spell it how he will), the game will be to miss rather than to hit; so that what seemed, at the first blush, to be due to the buck-jumping of a mustang Pegasus, turns out to be, in reality, the prophetic vision of a philosophic Bushwhacker.

But the environment of Mary?

And now, at last, it has come,—that chapter which I have so long dreaded,—my chapter on Virginia theology.

“Dearest Alice, could you not manage it for me?”

A backward toss in her rocking-chair, one ejaculatory clapping together of her plump hands, one shout of laughing amazement was her answer.

"I?" said Charley. "You must have forgotten that I am hard at work on that *Essay on Military Glory* which you say you will shortly need."

CHAPTER LVII.

HERE I am, then, since it must be.

Every one has heard the story of the Frenchman who, after a tour through America (or was it England?), had but this to say of us: that we were a people with thirty religions and but a single sauce. I hardly think that we in Virginia, at least at the period of this story, were quite so rich in religions as this. Very likely, some of the sects discovered by our observant Gaul had no representatives in the Old Dominion. At any rate, I, after diligent inquiry in many quarters, have not been able to unearth more than fifteen distinct varieties. I did not count, I admit, a certain flock of migratory Mormons that I once encountered on the wing; just as, I presume, a naturalist would hardly class the Canada goose among Virginia birds, from the mere fact that they refresh themselves, in the spring of the year, in our wheat-fields. Nor did I think that a man and his wife and a boy whom I once knew, could fairly claim to be numbered as a sect merely because, as their fellow-villagers asserted, they professed to believe something that nobody could understand. Then I am afraid that even the very sects themselves would insist on my leaving out the Bush-whackers,—slack-twisted Christians like myself, that is, who can't abide uniforms, and find it hot marching in ranks, and irksome to keep step; though we do cover the flanks of the main column, and, while we don't attack in line, yet keep up a rattling fire upon such stray sinners as we find prowling about.

And so forth, and so forth.

Still (for I would not incur the suspicion of niggardliness), it is very possible that, had I searched with greater diligence, I should have found more than fifteen. We will allow, then, that, at the period which we are sketching, there were, say, a dozen and a half religions in Virginia.

And when I say religions, I have not in my mind a milk-and-water, namby-pamby, good-enough-for-me kind of creed, but one of your up-and-down, robustious, straight-from-the-shoulder dogmas, that could ship off entire churchfuls of heterodoxers to—(but since the Revised Edition the word is scarcely parliamentary) without a wry face. Thither our Virginia Catholics used to despatch all our Protestants, to a man; but, inasmuch as their numbers were few (and, strictly speaking, the thing was, perhaps, contrary to the Constitution of the United States), they did it all very decently and quietly; sending them off by night-train, as it were, and making no loud mention of the fact.

Not so their opponents. Greatly outnumbering the followers of the Scarlet Woman of Babylon, they rattled them off in broad daylight, by the Through Mail, making no bones of naming the terminus of the road. Ah, but it was thorough work on both sides!

Ole Virginny nebber tire!

But there was one awkward thing about the business: if they kept this thing up, not a solitary Virginian would ever reach heaven. That thought gave me pause, one day; and ever since I have hoped that somebody had made a mistake, somehow. At any rate, said I to myself, in my slack-twisted, Bushwhackerish way, the Jews will get away; and that will be a comfort, considering what an Unrevised Edition of a time they have had for these two thousand years.

But as a guerilla, as a free lance, unattached and ununiformed, and falling in, as occasion served, now with one regiment and now with another, I found that things were even worse than I have represented them. You see they didn't mind me, and so talked very freely in my presence; and I was shocked to find that these

various companies and battalions privately nourished a keener animosity one against the other than towards the common enemy, Ah Sin. If each could have heard what the others said of them (as I did), and where they sent them! I came to the conclusion, at last, that there was not the shadow of a chance for any Virginia Protestant. There were not enough Catholics to keep them busy; they fell upon one another, and so many cars did they couple on to the Through Mail (ole Virginny nebber tire!) that it became a most Unlimited Express, choke-full of Virginia gentlemen,—Virginia gentlemen who had erred in the interpretation of a phrase or so, or, it may be, of a word merely, of Holy Writ.

Ole Virginny nebber tire!

I say Virginia gentlemen advisedly.

Environments may have their environments (just as fleas have other fleas to bite 'em, and so we go *ad infinitum*), and, thorough-going as was our theology, it had to succumb in the presence of our chivalry towards the sex; for throughout all our borders there lived not a man, lay or clerical, who would not have scorned to send a woman to the bottomless pit.

But as for the Virginia gentlemen, we shovelled them all in with an industry (ole Virginny nebber tire!) and an undoubting zeal that were above all praise.

That's the reason I always did love a Virginian; he won't stand any nonsense. "Do you believe that a prodigious majority of mankind were elected unto damnation, ages before they were born? No?" Swish! and that is the end of you! Another: "And so you say that *baptizo* means baptize, do you?"—"Why, don't the dictionaries and all the Greek profess—" budjum! and where are you now?

For, in matters of this kind, we Virginians of that day, if you would agree with us, would agree with you; but—if not—you might go—your way,—for the King James version obtained in those times.

Ah, but we were out-and-outers in those good old days!

Ole Virginny nebber tire!

Strange! for time was when things were very different in the Old Dominion. Our ancestors had brought over with them the spirit of the merrie old England of hundreds of years ago; and merry men were they, too, for a long time after they landed on these fair shores.

And, after all, what was the harm? for do not philosophers tell us that a people's conception of the Deity is but the reflex of the powers of nature (be they kindly or hostile) by which they are surrounded? And was not this a fair land? and if their sun was bright, but not too fierce, and their wheat-fields nodded to soft breezes, but knew not the hurricane, and if their snows were a fairy mantle for mother-earth, rather than a shroud, and Jack Frost spread, over pond and creek, ice just thick enough to store against what time the mint—the jolly jolly mint—should sprout,—if all nature smiled, why should these merry Norman-English pull long faces? Nor did they, but laughed and danced, bless their jovial souls!

But a time came when merrie England was merry no longer.

Somebody had invented a new religion.

It floated down upon her, a dense fog, impenetrable to the mild radiance of the star of Bethlehem. Floated across the Atlantic, and darkened our life, too. With us, as well, laughter became frivolity, and dancing blasphemous. There are rifts in the fog now, and here and there the sun is bursting through; but at the period of our story the shadow was unbroken. There was laughter, it is true. Do not the condemned often make merry in their cells? and young people will dance,—just as lambs frisk, even upon a bed of mint—heedless,—for 'tis their nature to. But they laughed and danced under a shadow,—the shadow of the next world. That world, alone, was real,—so we thought,—while this, from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand, was (though it seemed so solid) but a fleeting show, for man's illusion given.

And of this theology, which spread, like a black pall, over the land, this was the central conception; and I give it for the reason that you will not find it laid down

in the books, or in any single discourse. It is the epitome of the thousands upon thousands of sermons which I (not that I would boast) have heard in my day. Listen; for this was the atmosphere that our Mary breathed:

The world is the battle-ground of two mighty beings, the Spirit of Good and the Spirit of Evil. These two, from the first appearance of man on earth, have unceasingly battled together, the one to save him, the other to destroy. To save mankind—to destroy mankind—that has been the sole contention these thousands of years. Incidentally, of course (for such is war), the Evil Spirit has, beyond the harm done the human family, wrought immense damage to earth's fauna and flora (as the innumerable imperfections of nature testify), but man, alone, has been the objective point of all his strategy; and with every new soul that comes into the world the conflict is renewed.

And perhaps I am wrong,—for there are those who maintain that I have a bee in my theological bonnet,—but, were I a preacher, I should stand up for my side. I should not go about proclaiming it from the housetops that in the vast majority of these struggles the good spirit is worsted; nor glory in announcing to the world that Satan held the field, and that the only hope was that a few of us poor captives might elude his vigilance and escape. Captives! They told us that we were his when we were born!

Is there any harm in saying that to a mere Bushwhacker (who has not had the privilege of passing through a theological seminary) it seems that we have hardly a fair chance? It were better we were born orphans! Better that than to be the children of Sin and Satan, as those who know tell me we are,—though I will say that I cannot help hoping that there is some mistake about it.

But if it be, indeed, too true,—if it be a fact that all the poor souls that flit darkly, for a season, about this little ball of earth, are, in very deed, condemned before they are born, may we not hope that it is otherwise in Venus, for example, or Mars? I, at least, sometimes,

overborne by the immense tragedy of human life, steal forth alone into the night; and lifting my weary eyes to the blue spangled dome above, try to drown the darkness here in the light I see shining there; and oft-times I find myself wondering whether they be indeed as bright as they seem,—find myself praying, even, that it may be so.

For indeed it were pitiful, were all those worlds such as ours!

And sometimes I have felt, as I swept, with brimming eyes, constellation after constellation, and galaxy after galaxy, that I could bear up with a braver heart could I but know that there was, wandering somewhere in the immensity of space, one little planet, at least, upon which the Prince of Darkness had not set his foot,—one little world in which poverty and hunger and thirst, and toil and failure, and blood and tears, and disease and eternal farewells were unknown,—one world where a mother could smile back upon her babe, as it lay kicking and crowing in her lap, and laughing in her face, and not feel that the Grip of Hell was upon its throat.

Alice buried her face in her hands; but Charley sat bolt upright in his seat.

For such was our creed in those days. If any one shall say that Virginians do not believe that now, I shall not argue the point. It was notoriously orthodox *then* to hold that every infant came into the world under sentence. Not under sentence to be hanged by the neck, as murderers are—

Alice shivered. Charley lifted his hand. I ceased reading.

Flauti.

Oboi.

Clarineti
in B.

Fagotti.

Corno I. u. II.
in Es.

Corno III.
in Es.

Trombe
in Es.

Timpani
in Es. B.

Violino I.

Violino II.

Viola.

Violoncello e
Contrabasso.



SYMPHONY OF LIFE.

MOVEMENT III.

ALLEGRO MOLTO.

CHAPTER LVIII.

It must, in former days, before we Christianized them (at any rate, if we didn't do that, quite, we did what we could; we cut their throats for their heathenism and lands),—it must have been a comfort to an old Indian brave (before the Pale Faces had taught him what was meant by Peace on Earth) when his stalwart son, heir to his prowess, returned to the parental wigwam and cast into his veteran lap his first string of scalps. And so, in our day (for conditions change, not man), the youthful sparkle comes back to a mother's eye, and nascent wrinkles on her fading cheek become twinkling dimples again, when her blooming daughter returns, flushed with victory, from her first campaign. How did you leave your uncle and your aunt? And I hope all the children are well? And so you have had a good time? *Glorious!* Well, you must be tired; you need not go up-stairs; come into my room and take off your things.

But she has not had time to unbutton her left glove before her mother wants to know all about the scalps: how many and whose.

And here there makes its appearance a seeming difference between our young campaigner and the brave I have mentioned. He, as he dances around the camp-fire, waving in one hand the sinister trophies of his

victory, and brandishing his tomahawk in the other, proclaims, not without ingenuous yells, what a singularly Big Injun he conceives himself to be. She, returning from the war-path, has nothing to show; denies everything (as she laughingly unties her bonnet-strings), even to her mother. To the next-door neighbor, who runs in to hear, denies; but smiles mysteriously. Idle tales. Nonsense. Not a word of truth in it. Pooh! He was making love to another girl. But in the end, young man, your scalp is nailed above the door of that young woman's chamber, where all may see,—nailed up with laughing protests and mysterious smiles.

Which is as it should be. There are ways and ways of blowing one's little trumpet—or of getting it blown. Conditions change, not man. The vanity of Ajax was not greater than that of a nineteenth century hero. Where, pray, was the son of Telamon to find a bottle of champagne to crack with a war-correspondent?

Alice and Mary managed things economically. Each was the war-correspondent of the other. In their letters to Richmond, during these notable holidays, Mary recounted the victories of the enchantress, while Alice numbered the slain of Mary and her soulful eyes. For be it understood, fair reader, that while as a monographist I have indicated one scalp, merely, apiece, in reality a pile of corpses lay in front of each of these lovely archers. They were Big Injuns, both. But this by the way.

"Which one of them all did you like best?" asked Mrs. Rolfe.

"All!" laughed Mary, letting down her hair as she dropped upon a lounge. "How many were there, pray?"

"Alice wrote me that—"

"Oh, she's been telling tales, has she? And you believed all she wrote?"

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"Oh, yes, I knew his father, when I was a girl, and

I don't wonder at the son's being stupid, as you say. He could talk of nothing but horses, I remember. By the way, speaking of horses, what has become of that poor Mr. Smith who was so badly hurt last October?"

"He is still at Elmington, I believe; that is—yes, of course he is there. I mean we left him there."

"You *believe*!" laughed Mrs. Rolfe. "Upon my word," added she, "that is a summary way of disposing of a young man. He must be a nonentity indeed. I often wondered that you never mentioned him in your letters. Alice, on the contrary, could write of no one else. It was the Don did this and the Don said that."

"Her beloved Charley and Mr. Smith are close friends."

"Oh, I see; but I don't understand how it was that Alice seemed to take such a lively interest in 'the Don,' as she calls him, while you can scarcely remember that he is still at Elmington. She never wrote a letter without singing his praises."

"As I said just now, 'the Don' has the good taste to admire Mr. Frobisher."

"Ah, that accounts for Alice's liking 'the Don.' Am I to suppose" (something in Mary's manner made her mother feel sure that she was on the right track)—"am I to suppose, then, that you are interested in some one whom the Don has *not* the good taste to admire?"

"You are a marvellous guesser, to be sure," cried Mary, with a bright laugh, and springing from the lounge and into her mother's lap.

"Ah, I have hit the nail on the head, have I?" asked Mrs. Rolfe, with a pleased look of conscious sagacity.

"What a subtle brain is here!" continued Mary, smoothing back the white hairs from her mother's forehead, and gazing tenderly into her loving eyes.

"And so you have been hiding something from your poor old mother? But you are going to tell her now, aren't you?" added she, coaxingly. "Who is this person in whom you are interested?"

"Mary Rolfe!"

"Yourself? Ah, I see. Mr. Smith does not like you, and therefore you do not fancy Mr. Smith. Am I right?"

"Not entirely."

"Oho! Then he is another of those upon whom you have found it impossible to smile. Well, I cannot blame him, poor fellow." And she kissed her daughter's forehead. "The idea of your having never—but why did Alice never allude to this affair? She gave me an account of all the others."

"I can't say," replied Mary, leaving her mother's lap for the lounge.

"So you did not fancy him. Of course not, of course not. He is a handsome fellow,—very; but really, I cannot see how he could have had the hardihood to make love to you while maintaining his incognito, as Alice writes that he still does."

"Hardihood in making love is just what some girls would like."

"Of course,—*some* girls; but not a girl brought up as you have been. Did he make no apology? Yes? Well, that was to his honor. He is a gentleman, there can be no doubt about that. And you?"

Mary was lying at full length upon the lounge. "I forgave him," said she, averting her face.

"Ah, we can't help that, my daughter. A woman would not be a woman unless"—and reminiscent lights and shadows flitted across her face—"unless she kept a soft place in her heart for every man who ever loved her. But forgiveness and love are different parts of speech."

No answer.

"To pardon, I say, and to love, are different things," repeated she; and her heart began to throb, she hardly knew why.

"Sometimes," said Mary, covering her face with her hands.

CHAPTER LIX.

It was not many minutes after this before Mrs. Rolfe found herself across the street and closeted with Alice. "I am too tired and nervous to talk now," Mary had said; "wait till to-morrow; or, if you are very impatient, ask Alice to tell you. She knows all."

"My dear Alice," asked Mrs. Rolfe, for the twentieth time, at the close of a two-hours' investigation, "who is this Mr. Don or Smith? Who is his father? Who is his mother? How am I to know that my daughter is not interested in an adventurer or an escaped lunatic?"

Alice did her best to reassure Mrs. Rolfe on this point; adding, with a becoming little blush, that she did not rely upon her own judgment, solely,—that e-v-e-r-y-b-o-d-y was sure that the Don was all that he should be.

"E-v-e-r-y-b-o-d-y! Then why don't you take him yourself? I suppose this same e-v-e-r-y-b-o-d-y objected!"

"Oh!"

That was all that this whilom merry babbler could say. Her chin (just as though it thought itself the most highly improper little chin in the world) tried to hide between her shoulder and her throat, nestling down somewhere. In those days we thought it was becoming,—that sudden rush of roses to a young girl's cheek. Now she will look you straight in the face, and tell you without blinking that next spring she is to marry a man weighing (just as likely as not) two hundred pounds. It is straightforward, and manly, and "good form,"—but some of us can't forget the old way, and like it still.

"I must confess, Alice, that I can make nothing of the whole business. You tell me that Mary's suitor is entirely devoted to her, and that every one has the highest respect for him. His incognito need not trouble me, you say, since its removal is only delayed,—and

delayed, too, through some romantic whim or other of Mary herself. But there is one thing which nothing you say explains; that everything you say darkens; why is the poor child so wretched?"

Alice was silent.

"Alice," continued Mrs. Rolfe, placing her hand affectionately on the young girl's shoulder, "have you told me all? It is Mary's express injunction that you do so, you know."

Alice seemed to have something to say, but hesitated.

"Ah, I see," cried Mrs. Rolfe, jumping to a conclusion. "He *has* thrown off his incognito, and there was something dreadful,—a living wife in a lunatic asylum—or—"

Alice smiled. "No, it is nothing of that kind. To tell you the truth, it is all nonsense. Mary is making a mountain of a mole-hill."

"A mountain of a mole-hill?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"It is all perfectly absurd—"

"What disturbs the poor child,—tell me?"

"Some nonsensical fears as to his religious tendencies."

"His religious tendencies?" echoed Mrs. Rolfe, puzzled. Suddenly light seemed to break upon her. "For heaven's sake, Alice," she cried, pale with anxiety, "you do not mean to say that he is a Catholic! Don't tell me that. Tell me that he is a—a—an Atheist,—anything but a Catholic!"

"An Atheist rather than a Catholic?" said Alice, raising her eyes to those of Mrs. Rolfe for the first time for several minutes.

"Most assuredly; a thousand times rather. Why, when I was a girl, several of my acquaintances married young men who were pleased to consider themselves sceptics,—it was rather the fashion in those days,—but, bless you, the last one of them was a vestryman before five years of married life had passed. But a Catholic! Heaven forbid! One of two things, Alice, invariably happens to a Protestant girl who marries a

Catholic. Either, halting between opposing claims, she loses all interest in religion itself, or else she goes over to the enemy. Oh, Alice, Alice," cried she, with sudden vehemence, "do not tell me that my poor Mary loves a Catholic! Lost to me in this world—and—"

I will tell you, my Ah Yung Whack, what Mrs. Rolfe was going to say when Alice interrupted her with a merry laugh. She was going to add, "lost in the next."

It was, indeed, as I have hinted in earlier chapters of this work, the settled conviction of the Protestants of Virginia, at that day, that all Catholics were as surely destined to the bottomless pit as the very heathen who had never so much as heard a whisper of the Glad Tidings. (My Catholic friends often complained to me of this bigotry. For my part, I hardly knew whether to laugh or to weep when I remembered that they had made precisely the same arrangements for my Protestant acquaintance.)

"Why, who told you he was a Catholic?"

"Heaven be praised! Then what is he, pray?"

"I am afraid he is a little sceptical,—or—or—something."

"And is that all? Sceptical or something! Capital, Alicel!" cried she, with a bright laugh. "You have hit them off to a nicety. Sceptical or something,—that's just it. You see, my dear, when the beard begins to sprout on a youth's chin, he fancies that it is time he had opinions of his own. At this period he begins to sneer at the 'fiery furnace' story, and discovers that whales, though their mouths be large, have small throats, and could never have swallowed Jonah. *His* throat, at any rate, is too small to swallow such musty tales,—leave that to the old women! Sceptical or something! Excellent, excellent, Alice! Ah, that merry tongue of yours!"

"I am delighted that you take so philosophical a view of the case," said Alice, much taken aback at this unexpected praise of her wit. She might have added that she was amazed. How often do those we know

best utterly confound us in this way! Mrs. Rolfe was what some lukewarm people called fanatically pious; and Alice had been looking forward with dread to the scene that poor Mary must have with her when she learned that her daughter had given her heart to a sceptic (or something). Strange! it was the very energy of this fanaticism which wrought the result which so surprised Alice. It is possible for convictions to be so strong as to inspire a merry incredulity touching the honesty of opposing beliefs.

"Why, of course," rejoined Mrs. Rolfe, smiling complacently. (It was the word philosophical that did the business.) "The fact is, my dear, there *are* no infidels. It is all the merest affectation. Most young men pass through an attack of scepticism, just as, earlier in life, teething must be gone through with. It is a cheap mode of earning a reputation for brains. With girls, this striving to be brilliant takes a different shape. Many young women cultivate sarcasm for a year or so after leaving school, not having seen enough of mankind to know that a satirical turn infallibly indicates the combination of a bad heart with an empty head. But people of experience learn to pardon these foibles of youth. The fact is, Alice," added Mrs. Rolfe, smiling, "I know nothing in life more deliciously comic than a young graduate posing as a 'thinker.' Of course, if they are loud-mouthed—"

"That, at least, he is not."

"Of course not, of course not; since I hear he is a gentleman. But how, pray, does he show that he is a sceptic, or something? (Capital phrase, upon my word, Alice!) How do you know it?"

"During the whole time that he has been at Elmington he has never once—I am afraid it is more serious than you imagine—"

"Go on!"

"Never once put his foot inside the church."

"Impossible!" cried Mrs. Rolfe. "Why, 'tisn't genteel!"

"Never *once*!"

"And his apology?"

"The Don apologizing!" broke in Alice, with a little laugh. "You don't know him!"

"What! paying court to my daughter, and allowing her to go to church, Sunday after Sunday, without ever offering to attend her? I should just have liked Mr. Rolfe to have tried that game with *me*! Even now, —and we have been married thirty years! just fancy *me* marching off to church alone!"

To do Mr. Rolfe justice, those who knew him and the partner of his bosom best would never have suspected him of trying to play any such game on Mrs. Rolfe in their courting days, still less now. He discovered during the first month of the first year of the thirty alluded to, that his Araminta was a woman of views; and he had spent the twenty-nine years and eleven months immediately preceding these observations of Mrs. Rolfe in learning just what those views were, that he might the better conform to the same.

"The i-d-e-a!" chirped Alice.

"Yes, indeed. And if Mary will be guided by *me*—Upon my word, Alice, aren't we both too absurd! Has the wedding-day been fixed? If so, I have not heard of it. Before *that* happens, your Mr. Don, or whatever he is, will have to have a talk with *me*—I mean Mr. Rolfe." (Which, as she went on to explain, was, as in all harmonious households, one and the same thing. She could not remember, in fact, *when* she had expressed an opinion different from Mr. Rolfe's.)

Sly was Mr. Rolfe, they say; who always let his wife have the first say,—and then he had her just where he wanted her.

"He won't find *me*,—or, rather, Mr. Rolfe,—so sentimental as to refuse to hear who he is!"

In the end our spirited matron was much mollified at learning that the Don had not been "paying court" to her daughter, and yet, at the same time, publicly slighting her. The affair had been so sudden, etc., etc. But Alice's master-stroke was delivered when she told how the Don had fought against the avowal of his love.

Ah! they never, as we men do, get so old as quite to forget all their romance, these women!

"Honor is a good thing to begin with," said she. "As to the church business, I think we shall be able to manage *that*," she added, with a slightly influential expression about those lips which had so often carried conviction to the peace-loving bosom of the harmonious Mr. Rolfe.

"Provided, of course—" continued she.

"Oh, of course," chimed in Alice.

CHAPTER LX.

If there was one feeling which swayed Mrs. Rolfe quite as strongly as her religious fanaticism (to use the word of the lukewarm), it was her absorbing love and admiration of her daughter. Not a specially intellectual woman herself, Mary's gifts and wide culture were a source of continual exultation to her. "She gets her literary turn from her father," she used to say, truly enough; for he was a cultivated man (there were no "cultured" men in existence then, thank God), who would have made his mark in letters had he lived in a more stimulating atmosphere. In fact (though Mrs. R. always denied it with a blush), he had carried the day over more than one suitor for her hand, and won her young heart by means of his endowments in this very direction; for while *they* had been confined, by the limitations of their several geniuses, to sighing like furnaces, *he* had made a woful ballad to his mistress's eyebrow; bringing victory; and the defeated went their way, full of strange oaths.

So that a sort of sentimental interest in literature heightened Mrs. Rolfe's admiration for her daughter's accomplishments.

She was her only child, too; and no one can blame her for looking upon it as axiomatic that few men were good enough for her Mary.

Judge of her dismay, then, when she learned so suddenly that her daughter was profoundly interested in

a man whom it was quite natural for her to look upon as a suspicious character. No wonder, then, that she surprised her neighbors by the rapid pace at which she had crossed the street. She walked briskly, too, when she returned from her long talk with Alice, but her face wore a different expression.

For she was rehearsing a pleasant little drama as she hurried back across the street.

Her daughter's sad face had deeply pained her. It was plain to see that if she loved not wisely, she loved, at least, too well; and she pitied her from the bottom of her heart. Perhaps some anger had been mingled with the softer feeling at first; but Alice had put a new face upon the matter; and she was hurrying home to say to her daughter that she for one (and her father for another) looked upon the alleged scepticism of young men as the most harmless of eccentricities; and her face wore a determined smile. She did not intend to commit herself. It would be time enough to express her views (that is to say, Mr. Rolfe's) when this Enigma had given an account of himself. But if *that* was all that could be said against him, etc., etc., etc., etc.

And, would you believe it? the very incognito of our hero had begun to make the imagination of this staid matron cut fantastic capers. Who could tell? Strange things had happened before. Why not?

"Sceptic or something!" She almost laughed as she turned the knob of the door. "The poor child should laugh, too!"

The poor child did not laugh!

CHAPTER LXI.

THE poor child did not laugh.

"You do not know him, you do not know him," again and again she replied, wearily.

She might have added,—but she did not,—"You do not know me." And after all, what mother, of them all, knows her daughter, enveloped as she is in a double veil? For between the old heart and the young lies the mist of the years; and what eye can pierce aright the diffracting medium of maternal love?

Even Doctor Alice, when called in consultation, next day, could not probe to the bottom of the mystery.

And are there not ever some little nooks and corners of our hearts unsuspected by our dearest friends, even?—aspirations that they would have laughed at, perhaps,—fears which we should have blushed to confess,—hopes, alas, withered and fallen now,—that we have never revealed to mortal ears?

Now, within our Mary's breast there was, I shall not say a nook or a recess, but a dark and dismal chamber, the key of which had never left her keeping.

Let us call it the Cavern of Religious Terror, and cut the allegory short.

Suppose we try to put ourselves in her place, and see how things looked, not to an average girl of that period (still less to any one of this), but to one such as Mary was.

At the time in question, the dogma of what is known among theologians, I believe, as that of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, was held from one end of Virginia to the other.

That is to say, my Ah Yung, that every chapter, every sentence, every word, and every syllable of the Bible had been literally inspired, and was absolutely true. This we were expected to believe and did believe; and by what ingenuity we were to escape the dogma of eternal damnation I, for one, cannot see.

But we made no effort to escape it, regarding it, to a man, as the mainstay of society and the sheet-anchor of all the virtues. A belief in hell was ranked among the necessities of life.

"'Twas the merest luxury," quoth Charley.

Now, what is the imagination but a kind of inner eye, revealing to us, often with fearful distinctness, that which may be, but is not. And imagination was, as we know, an overshadowing trait of Mary's mind.

And what a training that imagination had! Her mother thought it was her duty, so let that pass; but hardly had she shed her long clothes when her precocious little head began to teem with burning lakes, and writhing souls, and mocking demons, and worms that die not. And, oftentimes, her little heart almost ceased to beat, as she lay in her trundle-bed, and, with wide-staring eyes, saw her own baby-self engirdled with unquenchable flames. For had she not fretted over her Sunday-school lesson that very morning (longing to dress her new doll), and said it was too long, and oh! that she hated the catechism?

Now, among those who accept this dogma, there are various ways of dealing with it. The immense majority inscribe it among the articles of their creed, fold the paper, label it, and file it away in some dusty pigeon-hole, in an out-of-the way corner of their heads, and go about their business. They are satisfied to know that it is there, and that there is no heresy about them. A true Virginian looks upon his faith much as he does upon a Potomac herring, and would no more think of finding fault with the one because of a knotty point or so, than with the other for the bones it contains. He wouldn't be caught carrying a stomach about with him that was capable of making wry faces over such spiculæ, not he. Look at that noble roe, that firm flesh, as stimulating as cognac! No cod-fish, no heresy for him!

So with the vast majority.

Then, there is another class of minds, with which to believe is to realize. To such this article of their faith assumes abnormal proportions, dwarfing all others.

Upon this alone their glassy eyes are fixed. Let us pass them by with bowed heads. Seeking heaven in the world to come, they have found a hell in this.

Our Mary stood between these two classes, belonging to neither; but by the nature of her mental constitution she leaned fearfully towards the latter. Seeing is believing; but with Mary to believe was to see. And from her infancy to her womanhood her fond mother had done all that in her lay, unwittingly, to overthrow her reason. That that fair mind did not become as sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh, was due to her father. It was he that saved her,—unwittingly as well,—saved her through books.

Mr. Rolfe had no son, and Mary was his only daughter. He made her his companion in his walks and in his study; and she became, like him, an omnivorous reader; and the baleful phantasms of her distempered spirit grew paler in the presence of other and brighter thoughts. The process went further. As she read and read, drawing upon all the great literatures (when she could, in the original—else in translations), there gradually dawned upon her a sense of the immense diversity of human opinion.

And yet, with what undoubting tenacity each people clung to its faith! Hindu, Turk, Greek, Spaniard, Scotchman,—each was in exclusive possession of the Eternal Verities!

The materials of the generalization were all there; and one fine morning she said to herself: Religious truth is simply a question of geography.

Mary Rolfe was a sceptic!

And yet she had not read one sceptical book. Where was she to find such in Richmond?

But this demure little miss of sixteen summers did what she could to keep her doubts to herself. How shockingly ungenteel to be an infidel! And a female infidel! An agnostic would have been different. The very sound of the word is ladylike; but, unhappily for our heroine, their day had not yet come. And for a whole year there was not a more wretched little woman in all Richmond.

Two clocks shall stare at each other, from opposite walls, year in and year out, and agree to disagree without the least discomfort to either. And would that we men were even as these serenely-ticking philosophers! Alas for the shadow that falls on the friendship of Mrs. A. and Mrs. B., when they become adherents of rival sewing-machines! And why, because our whilom chum now goes about with the pellets of the Homœopath in his vest-pocket, forsaking the boluses of the Regulars, why should we turn and rend him?

Dreading to be rent, our sweet-sixteener kept her daring speculations locked within her bosom, and was wretched; for man's opinions, like man himself, are gregarious,—and a thought is as restless in solitude as a bird cut off from its mate.

So this state of things could not last. And when Alice, after looking very serious for a week, announced her intention of being confirmed on the approaching visitation of the bishop, Mary had to speak. Alice was horrified at first; but, being a plucky little soul, more given to acting, under difficulties, than repining, she posted off to their pastor.

He made short work of Mary's difficulties; and, being well up in evidential polemics, battered down her vague objections to the credibility of Christianity with such ease, that, at the close of a two-hours' interview, she begged, in deep humiliation, that he would not consider her an entirely brainless creature; so utterly frivolous had all her objections been made to appear. Two or three books, left in her hands, finished the business. And, a few weeks later, Mary and Alice knelt side by side, and took upon themselves their baptismal vows.

Now, among the various phases of infidelity, there are two forms which are strongly antithetical,—the scepticism of the body and the scepticism of the mind. Who has not seen a vigorous young animal of our species, his head as void of brains as his body is full of riotous passions,—who has not seen such a one masquerading as a freethinker? Never fear, reverend and dear sir; thinking will have to be wondrous free

before any of it passes *his* way. Sooner or later you shall number him among the meekest of your lambs. A hemorrhage—a twinge of gout in the stomach—any reminder that he is mortal—and you shall see him passing the plate along the aisles, and offering to take a class in your Sunday-school. In fact, a few such reclaimed sheep are a positive necessity in every flock. They point a moral. Remember what he was, and see what he is. And the blasphemer of yesterday becomes the beacon-light of to-day.

But when doubts have their origin in the higher rather than the lower nature,—when a mind, at once candid and searching, gradually finds itself forced to question dogmas learned from a mother's lips,—for this phase of scepticism, the cure is far more difficult, and rarely radical. You may mow down the doubts with irresistible logic, they may be crushed into the very earth by the enormous weight of unanimous opposing opinion, but they are not dead. Remove the pressure, and the mind bristles, instantly, with interrogation-points.

"No," said her kindly pastor, patting her brown hair, "I am far from thinking that this little head is brainless. The trouble lies in the opposite direction. Stop thinking about things that are above the reach of the human mind,—above it, for the very reason that they are of God. Honestly, now, if we could grasp the meaning of every word in that Bible of ours, as though it were a human production, would not that, of itself, prove that it was of man? To be of God is to be inscrutable. Is not that what a fair mind should expect? Undoubtedly. But my advice to you is, not to bother your head about such subtleties. Stop thinking, and go to work. You will find that a panacea worth all the logic in the world."

And such Mary found it to be. And her class in the Sunday-school was soon recognized as the best. And she taught the servants of her mother's household, and read to them till they nodded again.

And so, when she went down to spend Christmas in Leicester, after a year spent in these works of charity,

she had forgotten that she had ever been a doubter. Two months had passed, and she was all at sea again. She felt that her faith was slipping from beneath her feet. She repeated to herself, over and over again, the arguments of her pastor; she read and re-read his books. Their logic seemed irresistible; yet it did not give her rest. Her head was convinced,—'twas her heart that was in rebellion. And she was woman enough to know the danger of that.

Faith or love,—which should it be? One cannot serve two masters.

"Nonsense!" said the cheery Alice, one day. "I can imagine now how he will look, marching to church with your prayer-book in his hand!"

"No, it is not nonsense."

"Pooh! we shall have him singing in the choir before you have been married six months."

Mary laughed (for who could resist the Enchantress?); and Alice, seizing her advantage, drew picture after picture of the reclaimed Don, each more ludicrous than the other (throwing in parenthetical glimpses of her own Charley), till both girls were convulsed with merriment.

"No, Alice," said Mary, at last, wiping the tears from her eyes, "it is a very serious matter. Do you know what would happen? *He* would not be saved, but *I* should be lost."

That was what troubled Mary. That was why she could not laugh when her mother made merry over sceptical youths. He who had spoken so well and so strangely, down there by the Argo, was not a sceptical youth, but a man of most vehement convictions. And she felt that she would be clay in his hands. His faith was formed; hers would be formed upon it. Formed upon it? Crushed against it, rather! For, after all, though of a deeply religious nature, as was plain, had he any religion?

That was the way we Virginians* looked at it. If

* Why Virginians? Can this so-called Mr. John Bouche Whacker be a carpet-bagger?—Ed.

you were not orthodox, you didn't count. If you were not for us, you were against us. "I look upon all Protestant ministers as wolves in sheep's clothing," said a Catholic to me. Per contra, I once asked a Presbyterian minister—a friend of mine—how he rated Catholicism. "What do you mean?" "Do you look upon it as a religion, for example?" He was a good fellow, and wished to be charitable. He hung his head. He felt half ashamed of what he was going to say. But he said it. Slowly raising his eyes to mine, he answered, in a voice full of sadness, "I do not. I regard it as worse than nothing."

Ah, we were out-and-outers in those days! An error was worse than a crime. *That* could be atoned for, with the one, by confession and absolution; with the other by repentance, even at the eleventh hour. But getting into the wrong pew! "*A blind horse tumbles headforemost into a well. He did not know it was there! Does that save his neck?*"

Ole Virginny nebber tire!

Such was the atmosphere which our Mary breathed. And—strange psychological paradox—just in proportion as her faith weakened did its terrors grow darker to her mind. That yawning gulf, upon the brink of which she used to tremble as a little child, seemed to have opened again. She believed less—she feared more. The peace she had gained was gone. The old dark days had come back. One cannot serve two masters; for either—

But faith or love—which?

CHAPTER LXII.

ONE day, Mary burst into Alice's room. "Read that," said she; and she threw herself upon the lounge, with her face to the wall.

Alice was a brave little soul; but Mary's pale face and tear-stained cheeks upset her, and her hands shook a little as she unfolded the letter. She read the first page with eager haste and contracted brows; then turned nervously to the last (the sixteenth), and read the concluding sentence and signature.

"Why, what *can* the matter be, Mary? It begins well, it ends well?"

"It is the same all through."

"The same all through! And you crying! Upon my word, Mary, you—"

"Read it."

Those satirists who claim that nothing can stop a woman's tongue have never tried the experiment of handing her a love-letter. Over Alice there now came a sudden stillness, chequered only by exclamations of delight,—

"So nice!—beautiful!—too lovely!—A-a-a-a-h, M-a-r-y! Mary, *let* me read this aloud? A-a-a-h! No? You goose! A-a-a-h, too beautiful,—too sweet for anything!—I declare I shall be heels over head in love with him myself before— *Gracious*, what a torrent! What vehemence! Do you know, Mary, he almost frightens me? Well, I have read the letter; and now, miss, be so good as to explain what you mean by scaring people so with your white face and red eyes?"

"It is hard," said Mary, after a pause, and trying to control her voice.—"it is hard to give—up—all—that—love. And such love!"

"Give it up! Are you crazy?"

"Much nearer than you think. I have scarcely closed my eyes for two nights. I feel that I cannot stand this state of things much longer."

"What dreadful things *does* he believe, Mary?"

"I have no idea."

"Then write and ask him. I feel sure that you could bring him over, you who are so brilliant and all that, you know. I wouldn't say so to your face, but I don't care what compliments I pay the back of your head."

Mary turned and laughed.

"I am glad," continued Alice, "I am not a genius with a bee in my bonnet; and let me tell you, there is a gigantic one, of the bumble variety, buzzing, at this very moment, just *here*." And she rapped Mary's head with the rosy knuckle of her forefinger.

Mary adopted Alice's suggestion; and there sprang up, between herself and the Don, a correspondence which lasted for two months. Eight or nine weeks of theological discussion between two lovers! Think of it!

Ole Virginny nebber tire!

Think of it, but tremble not, my reader. Not one line of it all shall you be called on to read. Were I an adherent of the Analytical and Intellectual School, as it is called, of American Novelists, you should have every word of it. Then you would be able to trace the most minute processes of our Mary's soul, and realize, step by step, how she reached the state of mind to which this correspondence ultimately brought her. But I will spare you; for I am a kind, good Bushwhacker, if ever there was one.

Assume, therefore, a hundred pages, or so, of keenest Insight and most Intellectual Dissection, and that we have reached the end of it. Here is where we find ourselves. (No thanks; it would have bored me as much to write it as you to read it.)

During these two months Mary has been in a perpetual ferment. She has read all the books of evidential polemics that she could lay her hands on, and her

mind has become a very magazine of crushing syllogisms. She has been pouring these out with all that eloquence that love is so sure to lend a woman's pen. Day by day she has become more thoroughly convinced of the impregnability of her position (just as lawyers' convictions bloom ever stronger under the irrigation of repeated fees,—retainer, reminder, refresher, convincer). From a trembling doubter she has grown into a valiant knight-errant of the faith, ready to measure lances with all comers.

And what has he had to say on the other side? Nothing. Or next to nothing. Has patted her on the head, rather, and praised her eloquence. Has promised that if ever she turn preacher, he will be there, every Sunday, to hear. And, instead of answering her letters, has told her that every one made him love her a thousand times more than before. Not an argument any more than a cliff argues with the waves that break against it.

And, like the waves, her enthusiasm had its ebbs and tides. Days of profound discouragement came over her, when arrows she thought sure to pierce his armor glanced harmless away and left him smiling.

Left him smiling. So she thought. But it was not so. Our little heroine stood upon a volcano.

When she was with the Don, there was something about him which told her what she could say to him, what not. But the paper on which he wrote was like other paper, and gave no warning. How could she, so far away, see the dark look that came into his face as he read this in one of her letters:

"How can you," she had said, at the close of an impassioned burst on the beneficence of the Creator, as evinced in the beauties of nature,—“how can you, as you look upon that beautiful, shining river, and the rosy clouds that float above it, and breathe this balmy air of spring,—how can you lift your eyes from such a scene of loveliness and bounteous plenty as surrounds you,—how dare you raise your eyes to heaven and say, there is no God!”

She could not see his look when he read that. All she saw was something like this:

"I cannot pretend to argue with such a wonderful little theologian as you,—I who know nothing of theology. But where did you get the notion that I was an atheist? I could almost wish I were one, for the mere happiness of being converted by you. In point of fact, I am nothing of the kind. How could I be? I need not look at the rosy sunset, or the smiling fields about me, to learn that there is a God. I have but to gaze into my own heart, and upon your image imprinted there. A fool might say that land and sea came by chance; but my Mary! Her arguments are not needed. She herself is all-sufficient proof, to me at least, that there exists, somewhere, a Divine Artificer. So don't call names. It isn't fair. Atheist; deist, infidel, old Nick,—what arrow can I send back in retort? Arrows I have,—a quiver full to bursting,—but all are labelled *angel*!"

How was she to know that she stood upon a precipice? But Charley saw that all was not well. Looking up from a letter he was reading (his face was red from a sudden stoop to snatch, unobserved, some violets that had fluttered out as he unfolded it). Looking up from this letter—

But Charley had his troubles, too, of which I must tell you before we go an inch further.

Between him and Alice, as well, a controversy raged. But in the case of this couple it was Charley that did all the arguing.

The proposition that young Frobisher maintained, in letter after letter, was this: that when a girl had promised to marry a fellow, she should never thereafter write to him without telling him somewhere—he did not care a fig (not he!) whether it was in the beginning, or the end, or the middle of the letter—that she loved him; just for the sake of cheering a fellow up, you know, away down here in the country, and all that. He would be satisfied even with a postscript of three words (he would), if you would but let him name the words, etc., etc. After this she had never written a letter without a postscript; but whether from the love of teasing, which is innate in cats and young women, when they

have a mouse or a man in their power, or from genuine maidenly modesty, she never said, in plain English, exactly what Charley wished to hear; as, P. S.—*Unreasonable old goose*, or, *How could I?* or, *I wonder if I do?* or, *What do you think?* But they were the merriest letters that ever were seen, and made Charley so happy (for all his grumbling) that at this period of his life he used to wake up a dozen times a night, smiling to himself, all in the dark; then float off again into a dreamland populous with postscripts of the most maudlin description. "Do you know," said he, in one of his letters, "that never once in my whole life has a woman said to me, *I love you?*"

Opening the reply hastily (to read the postscript first), the violets had dropped out, covering the poor boy with blissful confusion. *I don't hate you a bit*, said the postscript.

Some metaphysical notion must have come into Charley's head, as he read those words *don't hate*. Did he, perhaps, think, that somewhere between the negative don't and the positive hate there must lurk, though invisible, the longed-for word love? At any rate, selecting a spot midway, he kissed it with accuracy and fervor.

"Umgh—umgh!" grunted Uncle Dick, who had happened to step up on the threshold just at this critical and romantic juncture.

"I did nothing of the kind!" said Charley.

"What?" asked the Don, looking up from his letter.

"Nothing," said Charley.

"Uncle Dick!" called Charley, at the door whence the venerable butler had vanished, "come here! I say, if ever you tell Uncle Tom—"

"Tell him what, Marse Charley?"

"You old villain! There,—go to the sideboard and help yourself!"

"Much obleeged, mahrster; my mouf is a leetle tetched wid de drought, dat's a fac'. And here's many happy returns to you, likewise all enquirin' friends; and here's hopin' dat de peach may tase as sweet in you mouf as it look to you a-hangin' on de tree!" And he

vanished, backing out of the room, smiling and bowing—

As though a courtier quitted the presence-chamber of Louis Quatorze!

It was looking up from this very same violet-scented letter that Charley saw the Don gazing out of the window with a troubled look. "What has Mary been writing to the Don?" he asked Alice. "He and I don't compare notes, as I suppose you do. For some time past his face has been clouded after reading one of her letters. What does it mean?"

Alice acquainted him, in her next, with the nature of the correspondence, and was surprised at the earnestness of Charley's protest against the course Mary was pursuing. "If you have any influence over Mary, stop this thing; stop it instantly. She is treading on a mine. You and Mary are deceived by the gentleness and courtesy of his replies. You don't know the man. I do; and, as Uncle Dick says about a certain mule on the place here, he isn't the kind of man to projick 'long o'. 'She am a sleepy-lookin' animal, Marse Charley, and she look like butter wouldn't melt in her mouf; no mor'n 'twouldn't, eff you leff her 'lone; but I rickommen' dat you don't tetch her nowhar of a suddent, leastwise whar she don't want to be tetched. De man what tickle dat muil in de flank, to wake her up, sort o', will find hisself waked up powerful, hisself. Lightnin' ain't a suckumstance to dat d'yar self-same Sally-muil when she are tetched onproper to her notion. Don't you projick 'long o' Sally, I tell you, mun. Rrrrup! Umgh—umgh! Good-by, chile; for you're a-gwine to kingdom come.'"

Alice laughed so at this comical illustration that, most likely, she would have forgotten the injunction it enforced, but for a postscript in these words: "It is a habit with me—an affectation, if you will—always to say less than I mean. C. F."

Startled by this ominous hint, Alice fluttered across the street and into Mary's room; and there was a field-day between them.

The conflict lasted for hours, and seemed likely to

end in a drawn battle,—a defeat, that is, for the attacking party. Alice's old weapons, with which she had so often gained the victory over her less ready adversary, seemed to have lost their edge. In vain did she coruscate with wit, bubble with humor, caper about the room in a hundred little droll dramatic impromptus. Mary was unmoved, and sat with her eyes bent upon the floor. At last, with a flushed face, Alice rose to go; and it was then that she shot a Parthian arrow.

"Very well, Mary." And her eyes looked so dark that you would never have said that they were hazel. "Very well; have your way; but I should not have thought it of you!"

"You are not angry with me?" said she, seizing her hand.

"No, not angry; but disappointed. I never pretended to have anything heroic about me, Mary. I am only an every-day sort of a girl; but I can tell you this. If I loved a man—"

"Don't you?"

"If I loved a man, I should stand by him to the last, no matter what he might think of the—the—Pentateuch—or even Deuteronomy." And a twinkle danced, for a moment, in her flashing eyes. "What he thought of *Alice*," added she, with a parenthetical smile, "*that* would be the main point with *me*. And if he loved me as the Don loves you, I would follow him to the ends of the earth. Yes, and to the end of the world. To the end of the world—and—and—beyond!"

A noble devotion illumined her face as she uttered these words, and Mary's eyes kindled in sympathy.

"Then you would marry an unbeliever?"

"Mary, if you were to fall into a river, the Don would leap in to save you. You see him battling with waves of another kind—and—you hesitate! Plunge boldly in,—throw your loving arms around—"

"Oh!"

"Metaphorically speaking!"

"Ah!"

"Of course!"

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE two friends sat down and talked ever so much more. Alice did not show Charley's letter to Mary, but before she said good-night she exacted a promise from her to give up her religious warfare upon the Don.

Mary meant to keep her word, but the fates were too strong for her.

Among her relatives there was a young man—a second cousin, I believe—whose society she greatly enjoyed; for he was well-read, naturally bright, and a capital talker. He had studied law, and, in fact, been admitted to the bar; but he was not strong enough for that laborious profession, and, being an ardent student, soon broke down. During Mary's stay at Elmington he had had an alarming hemorrhage. This visitation (it had occurred on Christmas Day, too) he looked upon as a call to the ministry, to use the language of the period. And so the man whom she had left, two months before, a bright ambitious young lawyer, she found, on her return, an exceedingly serious theological student.

In Virginia, the relations existing between cousins of opposite sex are pleasanter, I believe, than in most other parts of the world. At any rate, these two were almost like brother and sister.

What kind of man was this Don? and, most important of all, in his eyes, how did he stand as to the question of questions? It was some time before he got the whole truth out of Mary; partly because she was loath to tell it, partly because, as a Virginian of the period, it was difficult for him to take it in. But it dawned on him by degrees, and gave him all the greater concern, knowing Mary, as he did, so thoroughly. Mary had, in fact, made an exception of him in her sceptical days, and told him everything. And now again (when once the ice was broken) she was as unreserved. She felt

that her heart would burst if she could not pour forth her troubles into some sympathetic ear. She had Alice, it is true; but there are many things which a woman would sooner say to a man than to one of her own sex.

And especially, during these conferences, was she never tired of sketching the Don. But, as line after line of his character came out in bolder and bolder relief, more and more convinced became her cousin that it would be a fatal blunder on Mary's part to unite her destiny with that of this man, whose convictions were as firm as they were objectionable. It was easy to see who would lead and who follow in such partnership.

And at first he had joined the crusade against the erroneous tenets of the Don: lending books and suggesting arguments to Mary; but he soon gave up even the slender hopes he at first had of success, and from that day, to Alice's great indignation, left no stone unturned to induce Mary to break with her lover.

And his words had great weight with Mary. His strength was rapidly failing. The hectic flush on his wan cheeks and the unnatural lustre of his eyes showed but too plainly that he was not long for this world; and his hollow voice seemed to Mary, at times, almost a warning from the next. Between him and Alice it was an even battle; victory inclining first to one standard and then to the other. Just at the present juncture she is perched on Alice's banner. For Mary has promised to let Hume and Voltaire take care of themselves for the future; and, since logic had failed, to trust to love.

She slept well that night, and awoke next morning blithe and gay. Awoke singing rather than sighing. Her song was short.

That evening her cousin came. She told him of her resolution. He seemed unusually ill that day; and whether from that cause (he coughed a good deal) or because he deemed it useless to remonstrate, he said little, and soon took his leave, giving her, as he bade her good-night, a look full of affectionate compassion.

Two or three days after this, on Sunday, Mary took

her seat in her mother's pew, nestling in her accustomed corner. I hardly think she heard much of the service; and when the pastor gave out chapter and verse (of his sermon), his voice fell upon her outward ear merely. Her thoughts were far away.

Ah, brother and sister Virginians, who can wonder that we stream to church so, on Sunday? What serener half-hour can there be than when the good man is talking to us? Have we not sat under his teaching for years? And doth not all the world allow him to be orthodox? Shall we watch him, then? Shall we weigh his words? *That*, being a safe man, *he* will do. Let him talk! He will say the right thing, never fear! Trust him! Give him room! While we, free from the anxieties of business and the petty cares of home, sit there, peacefully dreaming, each one of us the dreams that each loves best!

No; I am afraid Mary did not even hear what chapter and verse the text was from that Sunday. That Sunday, particularly; for the very day before she had received a letter in which her lover had said something like this: Yes, *he* went to church now; that is, he sat in the Argo every Sunday, from eleven till one; sat there and thought of nothing but her,—and so found that heaven which she sought.

Strictly speaking, these were what were thought wicked words in those days (ole Virginny neber tire); but Mary forgave, though she did not even try to forget them. And no sooner had she taken her seat than her thoughts flew to the Argo. She could see him as plainly as though he stood before her; and he was thinking of her. And of her only, of all the world!

Are you in love, lovely reader? Then you will not be hard on my poor little heroine, who ought to have waited, I allow, till Monday.

"You will find the words of my text in II. Corinthians, vi. 14."

In those days I sat in the Carters' pew. The Rolfes were across the aisle, a few pews in advance of us. Mary's cousin was still nearer the pulpit.

I suppose it is none of my business, but when I cast

my eyes over the placid faces of a congregation, I always fall to wondering what they are thinking about. Not the grandmothers in Israel, but the rest?

"II. Corinthians, vi. 14," repeated the preacher, slowly emphasizing the figures. They all do it.

There was to be heard that faint rustle that we all know, of the people making themselves comfortable. Here a little foot peeps cautiously around, and, finding the accustomed stool, draws it deftly beneath snowy skirts. There a wide sole seeks unoccupied space; while length of limb penetrates unexplored regions, avoiding cramp. Let us adjust ourselves, you in that corner, I in this, where we can sit and muse according to the bent of our several backs and minds.

"II. Corinthians, vi. 14."

My eye chanced to fall on Mary's face just at that moment. It wore the usual Sunday-dreamy look.

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

She shivered.

Alice glanced quickly towards her; but the thrill had already passed. She had regained outward composure, and sat looking at the preacher, calm and unobtrusively attentive.

The cousin fidgeted in his seat and coughed softly in his hand.

Alice fixed her eyes upon him.

Perhaps he felt them, for a deeper glow suffused his hectic cheek.

The preacher, after a few introductory remarks on the state of things which led the apostle to use these words, began with a sort of apology for calling the attention of his flock to such a text. And again Alice fixed her eyes upon the cousin, and again he seemed to feel their glow.

I shall not attempt to reproduce the sermon. His sketch of the advance of skepticism in Europe, in England, and in the North, struck me as labored; showing clearly that he had been set upon the task. But I shall not criticise it. He was at home, certainly, when he pictured the life of a pious, Christian woman whose

yoke-fellow was an atheist. It was a fearful picture (from the point of view of his hearers,—and he was preaching to them), of which every detail was harrowing. But I leave that picture to the imagination of my readers.

It is the last feather that breaks the camel's back.

Alice had lost.

The dying cousin had won.

CHAPTER LXIV.

I HAVE stated, elsewhere, that the dogma of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures was held, at this period, throughout the length and breadth of Virginia. It was held, in truth, in a way to warm the heart of a thoroughgoing theologian; for to doubt it was to be totally bereft of reason. But many of my middle-aged fellow-citizens who are accustomed to laugh at the Catholic doctrine of papal infallibility, will be surprised when I remind them that, at that day, we believed, also, in something very nearly akin to the plenary inspiration of sermons (those of our own sect, of course).

And my Bushwhackerish candor compels me to go further, and to add that it seems to me that we Virginia Protestants, at that day, carried the dogma of parsonic infallibility to even greater lengths than Catholics do that of the papal. For, as I understand it, it is only in matters of faith that the Pope cannot err (and if he be infallible more than that, I kiss his holiness's toe and beg absolution); whereas, our Protestant pontiffs did not hesitate to pronounce on all manner of questions,—questions of hygiene, for example; going so far as to add an eleventh commandment. As it is short, I will give it:

"Thou shalt not dance!" they cried in thunder tones; and, trembling, their flocks obeyed!

Yet dancing is (as you may find in the first dictionary you shall lay your hands on)—dancing is but the

rhythmic capering of the young of our species for a brief season (ah, *how* brief and fleeting!). The rhythmic capering of the boys and girls, reinforced, perhaps, by an occasional widower (vivacious, high-prancing, nor hard to please), or else a sporadic widow or so, forgetting her first and for getting her second.

This capering our Protestant pontiffs put down. Motion, *per se*, they argued, was harmless; for the lamb, most scriptural of animals, frisketh where he listeth. 'Twas the rhythm of motion that was hurtful.

"Miss Sally," cried a colored slave and sister to her young mistress, "you jump de rope and swing in de hammock, and you a member o' de church!" [Her very words; nor were they the remains of a half-forgotten African fetich. They were a legitimate deduction from the theology current in my young days.]

"Thou shalt not dance!" they thundered.

As though one bade the birds cease singing. And Virginia bowed her head and obeyed.

We had our youthful sinners, of course, who wickedly refused to be content with Blind Man's Buff and Who's Got the Thimble? (just as His Holiness is bothered with his heretics). The Pope, however, wisely remembering that this is the nineteenth century, would probably leave it to the astronomers to say whether the earth revolves around its axis; but as to the exclusively physiological question whether it were injurious to dance a Virginia reel, no Virginian of those days ever dreamed of consulting his family physician.

Am I beyond the mark, reader, when I say that the papal infallibility pales in presence of the parsonic?

Can you wonder, then, that our poor little Mary was pale as ashes as she hurried home that day?

Her mother walked beside her in silence. That was bitter; for during these two months past Mrs. Rolfe had been more and more won over to the side of the Don by what she had heard, not only from Mrs. Carter and Alice, but from several of her acquaintance who had met him in Leicester during the winter; and the aggregate of her favorable impressions had been greatly

strengthened by a little incident that had recently come to her ears.

It appears that Mrs. Poythress had been greatly interested in having a new roof and other repairs put upon the old church, and had succeeded in raising the whole amount, with the exception of eighty dollars. Now, one Sunday, as she was coming out of church with the congregation, a negro man, taking off his hat, handed her a small parcel, saying, "I were inquested to han' you dis, ma'am," and immediately bowed himself around the corner of the building and disappeared. When this was opened it was found to contain five twenty-dollar gold-pieces and a strip of paper on which was written the word *roof* in a disguised hand. The incident made some stir, as such things will, in a country neighborhood. Who was this, who was hiding from his left hand what his right hand did? The negro was hunted down by amateur female detectives, and proved to be none other than our friend Sam (who, it will be remembered, caught Charley and Alice at their love-making in the Argo). But nothing could be gotten out of honest Sam. "I was not to name no names,"—that was all he would say (adding thereunto, in the Elmington kitchen that night, that eff a five-dollar note wouldn't shet a nigger mouf, twan't no use to wase stickin'-plaster on him).

It was never discovered who had contributed the hundred dollars, but it was generally believed that it was the Don. As for Mrs. Rolfe, she never doubted for one moment that it was he, basing, too, upon this conclusion, half a dozen inferences, all favorable to the young man,—first, that his not going to church was a transient eccentricity; secondly, that he was a man of means; and, thirdly, that he was freehanded with the said means, etc., etc., etc.

This trait, as I presume everybody knows, is that which, next to personal courage, women most admire in a man. With what enthusiasm will a bevy of girls hail a bouquet, costly beyond the means of the giver, while the recipient of it, as she passes it from nose to nose, actually tosses hers with pride,—yes,—because

her lover has not had the prudence to lay by what he gave for it against a rainy day and shoes for the children. Which is enough to make a philosopher rage; and it is all I can do to restrain my hand from levelling a sneer at the whole sex; and I'll do it yet, one of these days, and come out as a wit,—one of these days when I can manage to forget that I once had a mother.

The more, therefore, Mrs. Rolfe heard of the Don, the more favorable she grew to his suit; and the more favorable she grew to his suit the more frequently did she allude to the absolute necessity of Mr. Rolfe's seeing the young man and hearing his account of himself, before he could be allowed even to look at her Mary. It would be time enough, etc., etc.; but let a cloud appear on her daughter's brow,—let her come down to breakfast pale and worn—

"I believe, Mary," Alice used to say, "that you often assume a rueful countenance simply to lead your mother on to sing his praises."

Never, in truth, had Mary felt herself so drawn to her mother as during this trying period of her young life; and to her ineffably tender, maternal solicitude her heart made answer with an unspoken yet passionate gratitude.

And now this mother, who was always ready with a soothing word, walked by her side in silence.

And Alice,—Alice, the merry and the brave,—where was she? Why does she, contrary to her custom, hang back so far in the rear, talking to Mr. Whacker in undertones? See, she has crossed over, and is walking down the street on the other side! Has she, too, deserted me? Oh, that terrible, terrible sermon! She ran up-stairs, locked her door, and threw herself upon the lounge.

Mary was right. The same words of the preacher which had stunned her had staggered her mother and Alice. Such was the power of the pulpit in those days. To both, as they stepped from the church-door into the street, the responsibility of combating the fulminations of their pastor seemed too heavy for their shoulders.

But our plucky little Alice was only staggered, and

soon rallied. She would not go to see Mary that evening, so she told me; next morning would be better.

And so the shades of evening came, and the shades of evening deepened into night; and still she came not. Is it not enough that my mother should desert me? The clock struck nine. No hope! There, the bell rang! A soft tap on her door; not Alice's merry rub-a-dub. A young slave and sister announced the cousin. Mary sprang to her feet: "I won't see him," she almost screamed; "tell him that!" cried she, advancing upon her late pupil in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" with looks so fierce and gestures so vehement as to drive her back in alarm upon the door which she had just entered with a smile.

"Yes, ma'am, yes, ma'am," stammered the Pilgrim, fumbling over the door-knob in her confused effort to escape. "Yes, ma'am, I'll tell him," added she, courtesying herself out, and shutting the door softly behind her.

"Hi!" half whispered, half thought she to herself, as she stood upon the landing, collecting her breath and her wits. "Hi, what de matter wid Miss Mary? Fore Gaud, I was afeard she was gwine to bite me, I was! What he done do, I wonder? Oh, I tell you. She done git tired o' him a-comin' round and a-comin' round, and f'reverlahstin' coughin', and coughin' and coughin', same like one o' dese here little fice-dogs what bark and bark and never tree nothin', dough he do drive off de oder varmint dat you mought cotch; and no gal don't like dat, be she white or black. He's a nice gent'mun, I don't 'spute dat; but he *are* powerful wizzened up, dat's a fac'. Howsomdever, I ain't got de heart to give him no sich message. A gent'mun is a gent'mun, for all dat, and I ain't had no sich raisin'. Nebberdeless, I ain't a-blamin' Miss Mary. She tired o' dat kind. Well, I likes 'em spry and sassy myself, I does, and I s'pose folks is folks, dough dey *be* diff'ent colors. Ahem! Ahem!"

She was nearing the parlor-door, and was clearing her throat for a polite paraphrase, when she saw the front door gently close.

He had heard, and was gone.

Mary never saw him again. When he died, about a year afterwards, she said that she had forgiven him; but I doubt if she knew her own heart. There are some things a woman can never pardon.

Nor do I think that Alice has ever quite forgiven herself for her delay at this crisis. For she feels to this day, I suspect, that had she gone to see Mary that evening this story might have ended like a fairy-tale, with everybody happy, just as it fares in real life. But she waited till next morning.

And she awoke with the first twittering salutations of the birds to the dawn; the dawn of a lovely April day. She too (for she was young and happy) saluted Aurora; but with a sleepy smile; and readjusting the pillow to her fair head, dozed off again; dozed off again, just as her friend across the way, exhausted with pacing her room, had thrown herself, all dressed as she was, upon her bed. Her mother, stealing softly in, found her lying there, shortly afterwards, pale, haggard, breathing hard, her features bearing, even while she slept, traces of the struggle through which she had passed. And every now and then her overwrought frame shook with a quick nervous tremor. Her mother wrung her hands in silence, and turned to leave the room.

There was a letter, sealed and addressed, lying upon the table at which her daughter wrote; while all about her chair lay fragments of other letters, begun, but torn in pieces, and thrown upon the floor, though a basket stood near at hand. "This will not do," thought her mother. "She must tell me what is in that letter before she mails it. We must look into this matter, carefully, before any irrevocable step be taken. Shall I take possession of it now? No, I will speak to her after breakfast. Poor child! Poor child!" And she stole out on tiptoe.

This was not the first time that Mrs. Rolfe had visited her daughter that night. At two o'clock in the morning, detecting the sound of footsteps in Mary's room, she had gone up-stairs and found her pacing her

room. She had entreated her to go to bed,—begged her to compose herself,—had pressed her daughter to her heart and wept upon her shoulder and bidden her good-night. Mary, hearing her mother coming, had hoped for a word of encouragement. But Mrs. Rolfe had not dared to give it, with the words of the preacher still resounding in her ears.

"It is all over, then," she thought, when her mother closed the door; and seizing her pen, began to write. Wrote letter after letter, each in a different vein; each to be torn in pieces in turn. At last she wrote one which was barely two pages long. As she folded the letter there fell upon it a big tear, which she quickly dried with her handkerchief.

That tear-stain, poor child, had you left it there,—but it was not to be.

Another fell upon the address, blotting it. She got another envelope. This time, as she wrote the address, she averted her head. The hot tears fell upon the table.

That would tell no tales.

Her mother had seen the letter lying there, and was startled. She would talk to her daughter after breakfast.

After breakfast. That was Alice's plan, too, you remember.

Mr. Rolfe, that man of peace, had slept through all the turmoil of the night. "Where is Mary?" asked he, as he seated himself at table, next morning; a question which evoked two simultaneous, though divergent replies: one from Mrs. Rolfe that Mary was rather indisposed, and would hardly be down to breakfast; the other from the Pilgrim, to the effect that her young mistress had gone out, betimes, for a walk. "D'yar she is now," she added, as Mary's footsteps were heard in the front hall.

Mr. Rolfe greeted his daughter with a smile of bright benignity. He praised the roses in her cheeks. After all, there was nothing like fresh air and exercise. As she bent over him and kissed him with unusual affection, he patted her cheek; accompanying each tap with a sort of cooing little murmur, which was his way when

she caressed him. He was delighted. He couldn't remember when he had seen her so gay. She must walk before breakfast every morning. What would she have? No doubt her walk had made her ravenous. No? Yes, we all lose our appetites in spring.

But her mother's eye saw no roses painted by the breath of morning, but a burning flush, rather; and when she took her daughter's hand in hers, it was icy cold. Her gayety, too, which rejoiced her father's heart, made her mother's ache.

Presently, and while our party still lingered around the breakfast-table, Alice came tripping in, fresh and cheery, the very personification of that April which was abroad in the land.

Alice was not long in detecting the hysteria which lurked beneath Mary's assumed joyousness. What had happened? An acute attack of curiosity, complicated with anxiety, seized upon her; and in less than a quarter of an hour she and Mary stood in the hallway across the street, exchanging a few words with Mrs. Carter.

"Let us go up to my room," said Alice.

"State secrets, I suppose," said Mrs. Carter.

"Oh, of course." And the two girls tripped lightly up the stairs.

"How jolly you are to-day, Mary," called out Mrs. Carter.

"Oh," replied she from the first landing, "as merry as a lark. It's the bright spring weather, I suppose."

"Well, that's right; be happy while the sun shines, my child. The clouds will come soon enough."

No sooner had the girls entered Alice's room than her face became serious. "Sit down in that chair," said she, in her quick, business-like manner. "And now," added she, drawing a seat close beside Mary, and taking her hand, "now tell me,—what is all this?"

"I am happy, that's all."

"Happy?"

"Yes, it is all over—and I am free—and so-o-o-o-ha-ha-ha-happy!" And throwing herself on Alice's neck, she sobbed convulsively.

Alice stroked her friend's hair in silence, waiting till she should recover from this paroxysm of bliss. At last Mary began to speak.

"It is all over," she sobbed. "It was more than my strength could bear. After that sermon—" and she shivered.

"How all over?"

"I have broken off the engagement."

"How? when? where?"

"I wrote the letter last night."

"Oh," said Alice, with a sigh of relief. "Will you just be so kind as to let me have that letter?" added she, reaching out her hand.

"It is already mailed."

"Mailed!" shouted Alice, springing to her feet.

"Yes. I took it to the post-office myself before breakfast."

CHAPTER LXV.

IN those days, before the mail-delivery system had been introduced, we had to send to the post-office for our letters.

If we were in love, we went in person, of course.

"Where are you going?" called out Alice across the street.

Mary came over to her. "I am going to the post-office," said she, in a low voice.

"I will go part of the way with you," said Alice.

The two girls walked on for a little while in silence.

"Mary," said Alice, presently, "tell me,—what do you expect him to say?"

"Don't ask me that," she said, with a shiver.

"I think I can tell you. Your letter, as you quoted it to me, severed all relations between you. But have you not a kind of dim, unacknowledged hope that he will recant his heresies and bridge the chasm between you?"

Mary walked on in silence.

"It is natural that you should nourish such a hope. But suppose it should prove delusive?"

"The die is cast. I must abide the issue. And, Alice, —though you think I have been hasty,—I feel a profound conviction that it is best as it is."

"Well, good-by! Be brave." And more than once, as she hastened homeward, Alice passed her hand across her eyes.

Mary stood before the little square window at the post-office.

"Any letters?"

The clerk knew who she was, and the sight of her pretty, pale face lent a certain alacrity to his calm, official legs. Briskly diving into her father's box, he handed her half a dozen letters. As she passed them nervously between thumb and finger, glancing at the addresses, he held his steady, postmasterish eye upon her. What else had he to do? Could not that other woman who stood there, could not she wait? Was not her nose red; and her chin, was not her chin (by a mysterious dispensation of Providence) bumpy? Let her stand there, then, craning her anatomical neck to catch his stony gaze. Let her wait till pretty little Miss Rolfe sorts her letters. Ah, that's the one she hoped to get,—that with the distinct, yet bold and jagged address, that I have noticed so often. Ah, that's the one—What name, madam? Adkins? Miss Elizabeth Ann? One for Miss Elizabeth Adkins. Beg your pardon,—five cents due, Miss Adkins.

My reader, be pretty. Let me entreat you—be pretty, if you can in anywise compass it. If not, be good. Even that is better than nothing. It will be a comfort to you in your declining years.

And your little nephews and nieces will rise up, some day, and call you blessed.

"Will you be so kind as to put these back in the box?"

The clerk bowed with a gracious smile; and Mary, placing three or four letters in her pocket, left the building, and turned in the direction of the Capitol

Square. She passed in through the first gate, and hurried along the gravel path. By the time she had reached the first seat she had grown so weak that she was glad to throw herself upon it.

Had Mary had her eyes about her, she would have been struck with the unwonted aspect of the Square. Our pretty little park, usually the resort of merry children, wore, on this particular day, a rather serious look. Men, in earnest conversation, stood about in groups. Others hurried past, without even giving her pretty face the tribute of a glance. But she saw nothing, heeded nothing; not even the dark, gathering throng which crowned the summit of the green slope in front of the Capitol; though it was not a stone's throw from where she sat.

She drew her letters from her pocket, placing the one with the jagged address quickly beneath the others. She tore open an envelope and began to read. The letter was from a former schoolmate,—a bright girl, but its cleverness gave Mary no pleasure now, but seemed frivolity, rather; and as for the cordial invitation (on the eighth page), before she got to that she had thrust the letter back into its cover. She gave but a glance at the contents of the next. The third made her forget herself, for an instant. It was a large, business-looking envelope, stamped New York; and she gave a quick little start, when, upon opening it, a cheque fluttered down before her feet. As she read the accompanying letter, a sudden flash of joyful surprise illumined her face when she found that her article (mailed with many misgivings two months ago, and long since forgotten) had been accepted. A sudden flash of joyous surprise, followed by quick gathering clouds; for, as she stooped to pick up the cheque, a fourth letter slid from her lap and fell upon it. The characteristic hand in which it was addressed she had often admired; it was so firm and bold. Was it her imagination that transformed it now? Was it changed? Was it more than firm now, and had its boldness become ferocity? A sudden revulsion came over Mary; and upon the words of the publishers—words of com-

mendation and encouragement, which, a fortnight since, would have filled her young heart with exultation,—for would not *he* be proud?—more than one big tear fell.

But that fourth letter remained unread. She held it in her hand, as one does a telegram, sometimes, dreading to open it.

Her own to him had been brief and to the point; giving him to understand that their engagement was at an end, without betraying the fact that her heart, too, was broken. She had even dried the tears that fell upon the paper, you remember. She had begged his pardon, of course, but had purposely excluded from her language all traces of feeling. As the thing had to be done, it should be done effectually.

What would he do? What would he say? A thousand possibilities had been dancing through Mary's mind.

First and foremost, would he recant?

Inconceivable! Still, this hope refused to vanish.

Would he be violent? Would his reply be a burst of fierce indignation? Very likely. Yes, that was just what one might expect from such a man.

Would he be sarcastic? Will he sneer at a religion which can make me break my word? That was what she dreaded most of all. Not, oh male reader (if I shall have any such), not lest his flings and gibes should wound *her*. If you think that, sir, you have never penetrated into the mysteries of the female heart. It was a dread lest he—lest HE should descend to such weapons,—lest this soaring eagle of her imagination should stoop to be a mousing owl. A Hero may not use poisoned arrows; least of all against a woman. She had never known the Don to use a sarcastic word. He was too earnest, too fearfully earnest to be satirical. He left that to triflers, male and female. He was never witty, even. He is above it, Mary used to say, within her heart, with that blessed alchemy whereby women know how to convert into virtues the blemishes of those whom they love. No, thought she; let him upbraid me; let him tell me that I have been false to my word; let him even say that I have proven myself un-

worthy to link my destiny with his (and am I worthy of the homage of such a heart? Did not even unsentimental Alice say that a true woman would follow the man she loved to the ends of the earth?); no; let him cover me with fierce reproaches,—but let him not be little! It is enough, and more than enough, that I have to give him up. Let his image remain untarnished in my heart!

Or, would his letter be a broken-hearted wail? She hoped not,—so she said, at least; and let us try to believe her.

Pressing her hand upon her heart for a moment, to calm its tumultuous throbbing, she broke the seal of the letter, took in the first page at one mad, ravenous glance, and the hand that held the sheet fell upon her lap.

No sarcasms, no fierce reproaches, no wail of a broken heart!—no anything that she had thought possible.

Brief, yet not curt, he accepted her decree without a murmur; as though a prisoner bowed in silence under the sentence of the judge. No commonplace, no rhetoric; no trace of feeling; and yet no flippant suggestion of the want of it. In a word, his letter was an absolutely impenetrable veil. As though he had not written: Mary was stunned.

She had seen, as she drew the letter from the envelope, that the top of the second page contained little more than the signature. She had not strength, just yet, to read the dozen concluding words. She leaned back upon the bench, resting her poor, dizzy head upon her hand. She heard nothing, saw nothing. Yet there was something to see and something to hear.

The clanking of many feet upon the gravel walk,—the feet of strong, earnest men. And every now and then women passed, with faces pale but resolute. And here, close beside her, a mob of boys, with eager eyes, sweep across the greensward, unmindful of the injunction to keep off the grass. Movement everywhere. The very air of the peaceful little park seemed to palpitate.

Then a sudden hush!

She turned the page and read,—

"It is not probable that we shall ever meet again, and I therefore bid you an eternal farewell."

A shiver ran through her frame. A moment afterwards she leaped from her seat with a piercing shriek; for almost at the very instant that those cruel words froze her heart a terrific sound smote upon her ear.

A few feet from where she sat the fierce throats of cannon proclaimed to the city and the world that old Virginia was no longer one of the United States of America.

CHAPTER LXVI.

FOUR years have passed since our story opened, and the autumn of 1864 is upon us. For more than three years Virginia has been devastated by war. Most of Leicester's pleasant homes have been broken up. My grandfather, however, trusting to his gray hairs, had remained at Elmington. The Poythresses were refugees in Richmond. Charley, who was now a major, commanding a battalion of artillery in the army defending Richmond, had, two months before, been taken in an ambulance-wagon to Mr. Carter's. A bullet had passed through his body, but he was now convalescent. Any bright morning you might see him sunning himself in the garden. The house was crowded to overflowing with refugee relatives and friends from the invaded districts.

And illumined by a baby.

"He was born the very day I was wounded," said Charley. "I remember how anxious I was to see him before I died."

"I knew you wouldn't die," said Alice; "and you didn't!"

"I am here," said Charley.

So, fair reader, Charley, in the last week of September, 1864, was a father two months old. As for the baby (and I hereby set the fashion of introducing

one or more into every romance*), his mother had already discovered whom he was like. He was a Carter, every inch of him, especially his nose. But he had his father's sense of humor,—there was not the slightest doubt of *that*. For when Charley, who, in speaking to the infant, always alluded to himself in those words,—when Charley, chucking him gingerly under the chin, would ask him what he thought of his venerable p-p-p-p-pop, he could be seen to smile, with the naked eye. To smile that jerky, sudden-spreading, sudden-shrinking smile of babyhood. You see it,—'tis gone! Ah, can it be that even then we dimly discern how serious a world this is to be born into!

Major Frobisher's battalion was in front of Richmond. The Don and I were under General Jubal Early, in the lower valley,—he a captain in command of the skirmishers of the Stonewall Division, I a staff-officer of the same rank.

I know nothing which makes one's morning paper more interesting than the news of a great battle. It's nice to read, between sips of coffee, how the grape and canister mowed 'em down; and the flashing of sabres is most picturesque, and bayonets glitter delightfully, in the columns of a well-printed journal. Taking a hand in it—that's different. Then the bodily discomfort and mental inanition of camp-life. Thinking is impossible. This, perhaps, does not bear hard upon professionals, with whom, for the most part, abstention from all forms of thought is normal and persistent; but to a civilian, accustomed to give his faculties daily exercise, the routine-life of a soldier is an artesian bore. So, at least, I found it. No doubt, with us, the ever-present consciousness that we were enormously outnumbered made a difference. One boy, attacked by three or four, may be plucky. It is rather too much to expect him to be gay. I was not gay.

It was different with our friend, Captain Smith. He was one of the half-dozen men I knew in those days who actually rejoiced in war. *He longed for death,*

* Is this the language of a bachelor?—*Ed.*

my lovely and romantic reader is anxious to be told; but I am sorry I cannot give her any proofs of this. It was Attila's *gaudium certaminis* that inspired him. He was never tired of talking of war, which, with Hobbes, he held to be the natural state of man. At any rate, said he, one day, drawing forth his Iliad and tapping it affectionately, they have been hard at it some time.

This little volume was on its last legs. He had read it to pieces, and could recite page after page of it in the original. How closely, he would say, we skirmishers resemble the forefighters of Homer. He never spoke of his own men save as Myrmidons.

He had become an ardent student, too, of the art of war, and had Dumont and Jomini at his fingers' ends. Indeed, I am convinced that he would have risen to high rank had he not begun, and for two years remained, a private in the ranks. At the time of which we speak, his capacity and courage were beginning to attract attention; and more than one general officer looked upon Captain Smith as a man destined to rise high.

It remains for me to say that he and Mary have never met since that farewell letter. What his feelings are towards her I can only conjecture; for, although he frequently speaks of the old times, her name never passes his lips. An analytical writer could tell you every thought that had crossed his mind during all these years, and, in twenty pages of Insight, work him up, by slow degrees, from a state of tranquil bliss to one of tumultuous jimjams. But, if you wish to know what my characters feel and think, you must listen to what they say, and see what they do; which I find is the only way I have of judging of people in real life. I should say, therefore (for guessing is inexpensive), that the captain's lips were sealed, either by deep, sorrowing love, or else by implacable resentment. Choose for yourself, fair reader. I told you, long ago, that this book is but the record of things seen or heard by Charley, or by Alice, supplemented occasionally by facts which chanced to fall under my own observation. Even where I seemed to play analytical, through those weary chapters touching Mary's religious misgivings, I was not

swerving from the line I had laid down. Every word therein written down is from the lips of Mary herself, as reported to me by Alice. Now, Charley tells me that never once did Captain Smith mention Mary's name, even to him. How, then, am I to know what were his feelings towards her? I remember, indeed, that once a young lieutenant of his, returning from furlough, greeted him with warmth; adding, almost with his first breath, that he had met a friend of his—a lady—in Richmond,—Miss Rolfe—Leigh Street—I spent an evening there—we talked a great deal of you—

The captain touched the visor of his cap.

Here was a chance of finding out what he thought!

"She said she—she said she—"

The young fellow had met a siren during his furlough, and fallen horribly in love himself (as he told me, a few moments afterwards, in a burst of confidence), and would willingly have invented a tender phrase for the consolation of his captain, whom he adored; but truth forbade.

"She said she was glad to hear you were well."

"Miss Rolfe is very kind," replied the captain, again touching his cap.

The young officer glanced at his chief, and instantly fell back upon the weather. "I think there is a storm brewing," he faltered.

"Very likely," replied the captain of the Myrmidons.

CHAPTER LXVII.

[LETTER FROM CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH TO MAJOR CHARLES FROBISHER.]

FISHER'S HILL, September 21, 1864.

MY DEAR CHARLEY:

Many thanks to your dear wife for the frequent bulletins she has found time to send me in the intervals of nursing you, getting well herself, and worshipping King Charles II. Have you agreed upon a name yet?

Or, rather, has Alice settled upon one? For I am told women claim the right of naming the first.

Old boy, when I heard that a bullet had gone clean through you I thought I had seen the last of you; and here you are on your pins again! A far slighter wound would have sufficed to make "darkness veil the eyes" of the stoutest of Homer's heroes. What pin-scratches used to send them to Hades!

And now, Patroklos, I will tell you why I refused, at the opening of the war, to enter the same company of artillery with you. Your feelings were wounded at the time, and I wanted to tell you why I was so obstinate, but could not. To confess the honest truth, I had not the pluck to place myself where I might have to see you die before my eyes. It would have been different were we warring around Troy. There, I could have helped you, on a pinch, and you me. But these winged messengers of death, who can ward them off, even from the dearest friend!

I had a cruel trial in last week's battle. When it became necessary to order Edmund's company to advance, my heart sank within me. [Edmund was Mr. Poythress's youngest child, a lad of barely sixteen summers, who had chafed and pined till he had wrung from his mother a tearful consent to his joining the army.] "If I do not come back," he whispered in my ear, "tell mother that her 'baby' was man enough to do his duty,—for I am going to do it." "Your company is moving," I replied, in as stern a voice as I could muster; for I felt a rush of tears coming; and he bounded into his place. I have seen fair women in my day, and lovely landscapes, and noble chargers; but never have my eyes beheld anything so surpassingly beautiful as that ingenuous boy springing forward, under a rain of bullets, with a farewell to his mother on his lips, and the light of battle on his brow. I held my breath till he disappeared within the wood. Why is it that we all shudder at the dangers of those we love, and yet can be calm when our own lives hang by a thread? Is it not because, while we know that the loss of a true friend is one never to be repaired, and which casts a

shadow upon our lives that can never be lifted [Charley keeps this letter, with another little note; which you will read later on, in a blue satin case, that Alice has embroidered with forget-me-nots. He showed it to me on the nineteenth of last October. The satin is all faded (and spotted, here and there) but time has not dulled the colors of the flowers], there is a profound, though veiled conviction, deep down in the heart of hearts of all of us, that, as for ourselves, it were better were we at rest? It seems to me that it is only the instinctive fear of death, which we share with the lower animals, and that conscience which makes brave men, *not* cowards of us all, that nerves such of us as have the cruel gift of thought to bear up to the end, against the slings and arrows of the most favored life, even. But it is a shame that I should write thus to a man with a brand-new baby!

I cannot picture to myself Alice as a mother; though, thanks to her graphic pen, I have a very clear conception of you as pater familias. I have laughed till I cried over her accounts of you sunning the youngster in the garden while the nurse was at her dinner, and the way you held him, and the extraordinary observations you see fit to make to him. I can't blame him for smiling. The andante in Mozart's D minor quartet is very beautiful; but never did I expect to hear of Charles Frobisher extemporizing words to it as a lullaby, while he rocked his infant to sleep!

But it is time I gave you some account of our late disastrous battle at Winchester. In order to understand it, you must have before your mind a picture of the region in which it was fought.

The valley of Virginia is a narrow ribbon of land, as it were, stretching diagonally across the State, between the Blue Ridge and Alleghany Mountains. As its fertility attracted settlers at an early date, its forests have mostly fallen years ago. This is especially true of the region around Winchester, which is situated in the midst of a broad, fertile plain, broken by rolling hills, crowned, here and there, by the fair remains of singularly noble forests. One would say, standing

upon an eminence, and surveying the smiling landscape, that this lovely plain was fashioned by the hand of the Creator as the abode of plenty and eternal peace. Yet a poet, remembering that it is not peace, but war that man loves, could not, in his dreams, picture to himself a more beautiful battle-field. And if I have to fall, may it be on one of thy sunny slopes, valiant little Winchester; and may the last thing my eyes behold be the handkerchiefs waving from thy housetops. Such women are worth dying, yes, even worth living for.

Observe, therefore, that the plains of Winchester are admirably adapted for the rapid and intelligent manœuvring of large masses of troops. Artillery, infantry, cavalry,—every arm of the service may move in any direction with perfect facility. And I need not tell an old soldier that such a field gives overwhelming advantage to a greatly superior force. When a general, as his troops advance to the attack, can see just where the enemy are, and how far they extend,—can see their reserves hurrying forward, and knows that when they are all hotly engaged he can push heavy masses of fresh troops around both flanks, and attack in the rear men who are already outnumbered in front, what can save the weaker army from annihilation? And yet, on the nineteenth of this month, Early's little army of ten thousand troops withstood, in front of Winchester, in the open field, without breastworks, from dawn till late in the afternoon, the assaults of forty thousand of the enemy. [*Note.*—This is an error on the part of the captain, but I retain his statement of the numbers engaged, just as he gives them, simply to show what was the universal belief of our soldiers at the time,—that they were outnumbered four to one. The true figures show that Early had fifteen thousand, Sheridan forty-five thousand men,—or only three to one. *J. B. W.*]* How a solitary man of us escaped I shall never be able to understand.

Possibly you have not seen in the papers that on the

* See Geo. A. Pond's "Shenandoah Valley Campaigns," if more minute accuracy is desired.—*Ed.*

seventeenth Early sent our division down the valley to Martinsburg (twenty-two miles) to make a reconnoissance. We did a little skirmishing there, and on the next day encamped, on our return, at a place called Bunker's Hill,—named, I presume, in honor of the Bunker's Hill on which Boston, with a magnanimity unparalleled in history, has erected an imposing monument to commemorate the gallant storming of Breed's Hill by the British. Here we lay down to rest. I will not say to sleep; for never, since the beginning of the war, had I felt so profoundly anxious. Picture to yourself our situation.

There we were, twelve miles down the valley, twenty-five hundred men; while, near Berryville, over against our main body of about eight thousand men at Winchester, lay an army forty thousand strong. Suppose Sheridan should attack in our absence? True, Early had marched over to Berryville, a few days before, and offered him battle in vain. But suppose he *did* attack? Could he not in an hour's time (for forty thousand against eight is rather *too* much) drive Early's force pell-mell across the pike, and, with his immense force of cavalry, capture the last man he had? And then *we* would have nothing to do but march up the valley, like a covey of partridges, into a net.

Such were the thoughts which flashed across my mind, with painful intensity, at dawn next morning. Weary with anxious thinking, I had fallen to sleep at last. The boom of a cannon swept down from Winchester. We are lost, was my first thought. Our army will be annihilated. Sheridan will set out on his march to the rear of Richmond to-morrow morning.

I rose without a word, as did others around me, and completed my toilet by buckling on my sword and pistols. There, on my blanket, lay Edmund, sleeping the sweet, deep sleep of boyhood. I could hardly make up my mind to arouse him. "Get up," said I, touching his shoulder; "they are fighting at Winchester." "They are!" cried he, leaping to his feet. The *gaudium certaminis* was in his eyes. The boy is every inch a soldier.

We hurried up the turnpike without thinking of breakfast, the roar of the battle growing louder as we advanced. Edmund chattered the whole way, asking me, again and again, whether I thought it would be all over before we got there. He had not yet been in a battle, and was full of eager courage. I told him I thought he would have a chance at them, though I actually thought that all would be over before we reached the ground. And what do you suppose we learned as we neared the field? That Ramseur, with his twelve hundred men covering our front with hardly more than a skirmish line, had held in check the heavy masses of the enemy all this time! They had been attacked at dawn; we had marched twelve miles; and there they were still, Ramseur and his heroic little band of North Carolinians. And I single out the North Carolinians by name, not so much because of their courage, as of their modesty.

Well, we were beaten that day, and badly beaten. That we were not annihilated is what I cannot comprehend. And why we are allowed to rest here and recuperate, with a vastly superior army, flushed with victory, in our front, is equally difficult to understand. Why were we not attacked at dawn next day? Yet, that he has not done so does not surprise me, after what I saw of his generalship at the close of the late battle. Put yourself beside me, and see what I saw on the afternoon of September 19th.

We are standing on an open hill, just in rear of where our troops have fought so stubbornly the livelong day. Where is our army? It no longer exists. It has been hammered to pieces. Here and there you see a man slowly retiring, and loading his rifle as he falls back. Every now and then he turns and fires. One here, and one there,—this is all the army we have.

Now look over there, at that field, to the left of the position lately held by us. Those are the enemy's skirmishers, advancing from a wood. Their long line stretches far away, and is lost to view behind that rise in the hill. At whom are they firing? Heaven knows, for there is no enemy in their front. And now the

dense masses of their infantry appear, in rear of the skirmishers, and glide slowly across the hill, like the shadow of a black cloud. Come, Edmund, cheer up, and have a crack at them. (The boy is standing apart, his powder-begrimed face streaked with decorous tears.) Set your sight at six hundred yards. Come here, and let me give you a rest on my hip. Yes, the man with the flag. Ah, you have made a stir among them. The line moves on, but one man lies stretched upon the field, with two others kneeling beside him. There is the making of a sharpshooter in the boy!

And what ponderous form is this that comes towards us, limping and disconsolate? 'Tis our friend Jack.

He, I need hardly tell you, * * * * *

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But he lost heart when his powerful charger fell beneath him, disembowelled by a cannon-ball. Poor Bucephalus! He had carried him through twenty battles as though he were a feather; and where was he to find another horse that could carry him at all! (Edmund tells a good story of Jack. He says that while he stood lamenting the death of his valiant steed, one of our advancing brigades, first staggering under the heavy fire, then halting, were beginning to give way. "Boys," cried Jack (he will have his joke), "boys, follow me! If they can't hit me, they can't hit anybody!" Edmund says that some of the soldiers laughed; and that as they followed the burly captain he heard one of them say to his neighbor, "Mind now; if they do hit him, I claim his breeches as a winter-quarters tent.")

Look, now, at those dark masses, halted in full view on that rising ground to our right. They are as near Winchester as we are. What are they doing there? Surely they can see that there are no troops between themselves and the town! Why do they not go and take it? Can it be their advance has been checked by the stray shots of a score of retreating sharpshooters?

Now turn and look a mile away, to our left. See that dense cloud of dust, lit up with the flashing of

carbine-shots, the gleaming of sabres, and the glare of bursting shells! There, along the pike, our handful of cavalry, struggling bravely with overwhelming odds, is falling back upon the town. Come, Edmund, there is no use staying here any longer. Yes, I think they will get there before us. Pluck up your spirits, my boy; a true soldier shows best in adversity.

I have not tried, my dear Charley, to give you a military account of this battle. I have striven, instead, to lay before you a picture of the field as it appeared when Edmund, Jack, and I sadly turned towards Winchester. It was then the middle of the afternoon. Would you believe that we reached the town in safety,—entered a house, whose fair inmates gave us bread (it was all—almost more than all they had),—retired, afterwards, up the pike, along which our soldiers straggled in twos and threes,—went into camp,—arose next morning,—and made our way to Fisher's Hill? And here we are still, resting as quietly as though no enemy were in our front!

I have known men to leave the gaming-table, after a big run of luck, so as to spend their winnings before the tide turned. Perhaps our friends the enemy wish to enjoy their glory awhile before risking the loss of it in another battle; but it isn't war.

* * * * *

Yours, ever,
DORY.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

"JACK," said Alice, "every time I read this letter of poor Dory's, I find it harder to understand how General Sheridan has so high a reputation in the North as a soldier. Can you explain it?"

"I cannot," I replied, thumping the table fiercely with my fist; for every Whacker molecule in me stood on end.

"I can," put in Charley, in his dry way.

I turned and fixed my eyes on that philosopher. His were fixed upon the ceiling. His head rested upon the back of his chair, his legs (they are stoutish now) were stretched across another.

"The deuse you can!" for my sturdy Saxon atoms were in arms.

Charley removed his solid limbs from the chair in front of him, with the effort and grunt of incipient obesity [incipient obesity indeed! and from *you!* whe-e-ew! *Alice*], and, walking up to the mantel-piece, rested both arms upon it at full length; then, tilting his short pipe at an angle of forty-five degrees, he surveyed me with a smile of amiable derision. "Yes, I can," said he, at last. And with each word the short pipe nodded conviction.

"Do it, then," said I.

"I will," said he. And diving down into his pocket, he drew forth a manuscript; and striking an attitude, and placing his glasses (*cheu, fugaces, Postume, Postume, labuntur anni*) upon his oratorical nose, he unfolded the paper. Clearing his throat:

"HANNIBAL!" began he, in thunder-tones; then, dropping suddenly into his usual soft voice, and letting fall his right hand containing the paper to the level of his knee,—"*this*," he added, peering gravely at us over his spectacles, "*is my Essay on Military Glory!*"

Alice made herself comfortable, and spread out her fan; for laughing makes her warm nowadays.

Had she any right to look for humor in an essay by her husband? Look at her own chapter on the loves of Mary and the Don. A more sentimental performance I never read. Show me a trace therein, if you can, of witty, sparkling Alice of the merry-glancing hazel eyes! Look, for the matter of that, at this book of mine. Why, the other day, glancing over the proofs* of a certain chapter, and forgetting for the moment, as I read the printed page, that I had written it, would you believe it, my eyes filled with tears? (And a big one rolled down so softly that I started when it struck

* Mr. Whacker must mean that he intended "*glancing over the proofs.*"
—Ed.

the paper.) Is this, cried I, the jolly book that my friends expect of me? Alas, fair reader, fellow-pilgrim through this valley of shadows, I trust full many a sun-streak may fall across your path. As for me,—I can only sing the song that is given me.

CHAPTER LXIX.

[Being an Essay on Military Glory; by Charles Frobisher, Esquire, M.A. (Univ. Va.); late Major of Artillery C. S. A.]

Omnibus, mentis compotibus, SKIPIENDUM, utpote quod TINKERII MOLEM NON VALEAT.]

CHARLEY shifted his manuscript to his left hand, and smoothing down the leaves with his right, and glancing at the paper, raised his eyes to mine. The tip of his forefinger, placed lightly against the tip of his nose, lent to that organ an air of rare subtlety.

"A julep," he began, "differs from a thought in this: that while—"

"A julep!" cried Alice; "why, just now you began with Hannibal."

Charley stood for a moment, smiling, as he toyed with the leaves of his essay with the forefinger of his right hand.

"True; I had turned the thing upside down, and was reading it backwards. A julep," he began again, with an authoritative air—

"What connection," interrupted Alice, "can there be between juleps and military men?"

"Innocence," ejaculated Charley, raising his eyes to heaven, "thy name is Alice!"

"Go on; I shall not interrupt you again."

"A julep differs from a thought in this: that while an average man goes to the bottom of the former, of the latter only philosophers can sound the depths." With that he sat down.

"Is that the end of your Essay on Military Glory?" I asked.

"No. That is the first round. I call for time. I

am exhausted by the vastness of the generalization." And leaning back in his chair, he closed his eyes with a sigh of profound lassitude. "My dear," said he, presently, in a feeble whisper,—“my dear, don't you think this lecture would go off better were it illustrated?"

Alice looked puzzled for a moment, then rose with a bright laugh, and, making a pass at Charley (who minds Jack?) which he dodged, tripped briskly out of the room.

"Charley," said I, "you are a boundless idiot!"

"Too true; but there is method in my madness." which I found to be so when Alice (who could have wished a more charming waitress?) returned with the illustrations.

Illustrations in the highest form of art; for they appealed to the ear with the soft music of their jingle, the nostrils by their fragrance, the touch by their coldness, to the eye by the fascinating contrast of cracked ice and vivid green; while the imagination, soaring above the regions of sense, beheld within those frosted goblets, jocund, blooming summer seated in the lap of rimy winter,—or the triumph of man over nature.

Ole Virginny nebber tire!

"What kind of an idiot did you say?" said Charley, as we chinked glasses.

"I couldn't find any straws," said Alice.

"I accept your apology," said Charley. His voice sounded soft, mellow, and far away; for his nose was plunged beneath a mass of crushed ice. "Straws," added he, growing magnanimous, "they are only fit to show which way the wind blows." And with a magnificent sweep of his left hand he indicated his disdain for all possible atmospheric currents. "Ladies and gentlemen," added he, as he rose from his seat; and this time there was an indescribable jumble in the voice of the orator—(not at all, Mr. Teetotaller! 'twas caused by the cracked ice),—for as Charley rose to continue the reading of his Essay on Military Glory, he had pointed the stem of his goblet at the ceiling; striving, at the same time, by a skilful adjustment of his features, to prevent its contents from falling on the floor,—such

great store did Alice set by her new carpet. But, of course, when he opened his mouth to say ladies and gentlemen, a baby avalanche fell in upon his organs of speech; so that he didn't manage to say anything of the kind. "That," said he, placing the glass upon the table, "will do as a vignette; the illustrations we shall contrive to work in farther on."

One julep gives Charley the swagger of a four-bottle man.

"Where was I?" asked he, drawing the manuscript from his pocket. "I'll begin again. HANNIBAL! No, confound it! Ah, here we are: "An average man has strength to go to the bottom of a julep; only a philosopher can sound the depth of a thought."

At these words Alice rose from her seat, and, leaning forward, first fixed a scrutinizing glance upon her husband, then advanced towards him with a twinkle in her merry-glancing hazel eye.

"If half the audience," said Charley, with an imperious wave of the hand, "will persist in wandering over the floor, the reading is suspended."

Alice took her seat, and did nothing but laugh till the end of the chapter. I laughed, too, but without exactly knowing why. But laughter (singularly enough, —for it is a blessing) is contagious. And then the julep had been stiff; so that the very tables and chairs about the room seemed to beam upon me with a certain twinkling, kindly Bushwhackerishness.*

"Here's a lot of stuff that I shall skip," began Charley; and he turned over, with careless finger, leaf after leaf. As he did so Alice rose slightly from her seat with a peering look.

"Who is reading this Essay on Military Glory?" asked Charley, with a severe look at his wife over his glasses (alas, alas, *nec pietas moram?*).

"Very well; go on," said Alice, dropping back into her chair with a fresh burst of laughter. She had had no julep. What was she laughing at?

* I need hardly say that I decline to be responsible for such sentiments.—*Ed.*

"It consists (my opening) of a series of illustrations, showing how much nonsense comes to be believed through people's not going to the bottom of things. We suppose ourselves to have an opinion (there is no commoner delusion), but we fail to subject that opinion to any crucial test; though nothing is easier. The crucial test, for example, of sulphuretted hydrogen, is a certain odor which we encounter, when, with incautious toe, we explode an egg in some outlying nest which no boy could find during the summer—"

"That will do," said Alice; though why women should turn up their blessed little noses at such allusions is hard to understand, seeing what keen and triumphant pleasure they all derive from the detection of unparliamentary odors at unexpected times and places.

"I have here," continued Charley, carelessly turning the leaves of his manuscript, "a nestful of such illustrations."

"We will excuse you from hatching them in our presence," said Alice; and with wrinkled nose she disdainfully sniffed a supposititious egg of abandoned character.

"I have already passed them over. After all, what is the use of them? You and Charley can understand what I mean without them; and if you can, why not the reader, too? Are readers idiots? I'll plunge *in medias res*. Let us begin here:" (reading) "It is the same with military glory. How many battles have been fought since the world began? Arithmetic stands pale in the presence of such a question! In every one of these conflicts one or the other commander had the advantage. How many of them are famous? Count them. For every celebrated general that you show me, I will show you a finger—or a toe—"

"You are too anatomical by half," protested Alice.

"Why is this? Think for a moment? Why is this victor famous, that victor not? It is the simplest thing in the world if you will but apply the crucial test."

Charley paused in his reading and peered gravely over his glasses. "What is it, goose?" asked his admiring spouse.

"The crucial test is disparity of numbers. Formulæ:

equality, victory, obscurity,—disparity, victory, glory. There you have it in a nutshell. Example (from Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire): emperor of the West and emperor of the East, battling, with the world as a stake. Innumerable but equal hosts. Days of hacking and hewing. Victory to him of the East (or West). His name? Have forgotten it. Equality, victory, obscurity!

"See? By the way, Jack, does not the brevity of my military style rather smack of Cæsar's Commentaries?"

"Again—scene, Syria. Christians of the Byzantine empire, and Mahometans. Final struggle. Vast but equal armies. Three days of carnage. Remnant of Christians decline crown of glory. Name of victor? I pause?—and so on, and so on, and so on.

"But now, *per contra*, read, by the light of our hypothesis, the following:

PARADIGM OF GLORY.

Nominative	Napoleon	Italy	disparity	victory	glory
Genitive	Cæsar	Pharsalia	ditto	ditto	ditto
Dative	Alexander	Persia	ditto	ditto	ditto
Accusative	Zengis Khan	Asia	ditto	ditto	ditto
Vocative	Sheridan	Winchester	ditto	ditto	ditto
Ablative	Hannibal—				

"Ah, you have gotten to him at last," said Alice.

"Yes, my dear," said Charley, raising his eyes from the manuscript; "but the vignettes grow dim. Let's have an illustration in honor of the victor of Cannæ. Let there be lots of ice as a memorial of the avalanches he defied, piled mountain-high because of the Alps he overcame. Typify with mint the glorious verdure of Italy as it first bursts upon his view."

Alice typified—

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"After all," said Charley, "this is a pretty good old world to live in." And he filipped, gently, the rim of his goblet with his middle finger. (Ching! ching!)

"It was B flat when it was full, and now (ching! ching!) it is a good C sharp. Listen!" And shutting one eye, he cocked the other meditatively towards the ceiling. (Ching! ching!) "Acoustics or something, I suppose. A pretty good old world, I tell you, boys. (Ching! ching!) H'm! h'm! h'm!" It was a low, contented chuckle. "Jack-Whack, you ought to have a sweet little darling of a wife, just like—"

"Mr. Frobisher, you are positively boozy!"

"Well, well, my precious little ducky dumpling, I don't write Essays on Military Glory every day. H'm! h'm! h'm! h'm! I left out my very best illustration, simply because I couldn't work it into my paradigm. It is a little poem I heard once,—h'm! h'm! h'm! h'm! (Ching! ching!)"

'Dad and Jamie had a fight,
They fit all day, and they fit all night;
And in the mornin' Dad was seen
A-punchin' Jamie on the Bowlin' Green.'

"One would say, taking the four lines together, that Dad probably got the better of Jamie in the end. But who thinks of ranking him, for that reason, with the world's famed conquerors? Preposterous! They were obviously too evenly matched. See? No one knows, even, who Dad was, or Jamie; or what Bowlin' Green drank their gore. (Ching! ching!) D natural. Nor even the name of the poet. Some old, old Aryan myth, I suppose, symbolizing the struggle between Light and Darkness,—'in the morning Dad'—the sun—'was seen a-punchin' Jamie'—moon, of course—'on the Bowlin' Green,'—that is, this beautiful world. (Ching! ching!) *What are you up to?*"

Alice had made a dive at Charley, who, mistaking her object, defended himself vigorously. Meantime, she had darted with her right hand down into his breast-pocket, drawing out the manuscript.

"If you supposed I wished to kiss your juleppy moustache, you are much mistaken. This is what I wanted." And she brandished the Essay high in the air in triumph. "I knew it! I knew it!" cried she. "Listen, Jack!"

“‘BALTIMORE, August 14, 1885.

“‘CHARLES FROBISHER, ESQ.:

“‘*Dear Sir*,—‘The guano will be shipped by to-morrow’s boat, as per valued order.

“‘Very truly yours,

“‘BUMPKINS & WINDUP.’

“And look here—and look here,—nothing but a lot of business letters. He has not written one line! His so-called Essay on Military Glory is a myth!”

“We got the juleps, at any rate. Jack-Whack, you write it up.”

“If Alice will agree to illustrate again.”

“Not I!”

“Q minor!” sighed Charley, thumping his empty goblet. “Jack-Whack, my poor boy, we dwell in a vale of tears!”

CHAPTER LXX.

It is eight o’clock in the morning, at Harrisonburg, in the leafy month of June. You board the train from Staunton. As it rushes down the Valley there lies spread out before you, on either side, a scene of rare loveliness. Fertile plains, waving with grain; rolling, grass-clad hills, laughing in the sunshine, dotted here and there with woods of singular beauty; limpid streams, brawling over glittering, many-hued pebbles; a pure air filling the lungs with a glad sense of health and well-being. There are few such lands.

But come, take this seat on the right-hand side of the car, and I will tell you of some things which happened twenty years ago.

Ah, there it is! Don’t you see that bluish thread, winding along over there, skirting that hill? That is the Valley Pike. There was no railroad there then. Take a good look at it. Take a good look, for heroes have trodden it.

Ah, the train has stopped. Do you see that grizzled

farmer, who has ridden over to the station to get his mail? I know him, for I never forget a face. He was there at Manassas when Bee said, "Look at Jackson, standing like a stone wall!" Yes, many of the survivors of the Stonewall Brigade live along this road.

That is the Massanutten Mountain, a spur of the Blue Ridge. How beautiful it is! Straight and smooth and even, with a little notch every now and then; clothed from base to summit with primeval forests, it looks, crested as it is here and there with snowy clouds, like a gigantic green wave rolling across the plain.

A wall not unlike this once stood on either hand in the Red Sea; and Miriam smote her tambourine in triumph, praising the God of Israel.

As we rush along, the mountain bears us company, as though doing the honors of the Valley.

The train stops at Strasburg. There, too, Massanutten ends.

As though a Titan had cleft it with his sword, so abruptly does it sink into the plain.

You are on your way to Alexandria, and will have to wait here four hours; so let us look about us. Run your eye up that sharp acclivity lying over against the town.

Upon the brink of that steep, twenty years ago, stood Gordon. Accompanied by a few staff-officers, he had spent the greater part of the day in the toilsome ascent, tearing his way through dense, pathless jungles, struggling among untrodden rocks; and now, on the seventeenth of October, 1864, he stands there sweeping the plain with his field-glass. What does he see? Why does he forget, in an instant, his fatigue? What is it that fires with ardor his martial face?

But before I tell you that, a word with you.

In the South, at the breaking out of the war, there was not to be found one solitary statesman; nor one throughout the length and breadth of the North. Not that capacity was lacking to either side. Great capacity is not required. Chesterfield heard the rumble of the coming French revolution, to which the ears of Burke were deaf. After all, statecraft is but the application

of temporary expedients to temporary emergencies; and you might carve a score of Gladstones and Disraelis out of the brain of Herbert Spencer without in the least impairing his cerebrum. Pericles shone in Athens for an hour; Aristotle dominated the world for twenty centuries. Such is the measure of a statesman; such that of a thinker.

Statesmen, therefore (or the making of such), we had, I must suppose, by the thousand. I have said they were not to be found.

For years before we came to blows the animosity between North and South had been deepening, reaching at last this point, that he who would catch the ear of either side could do so only by fierce denunciation of the other; he that would have it thought that he loved *us* had only to show that he hated *you*. Men of moderation found no hearers. The voices of the calm and clear-headed sank into silence; and Wigfall and Toombs, and Sumner and Phillips walked up and down in the land.

Yes, no doubt we had thousands of statesmen who knew better. But who knew *them*? And so Seward kept piping of peace in ninety days, and Yancey—Polyphemus of politicians—was willing to drink all the blood that would be shed. A Yankee wouldn't fight, said the one. The slave-drivers, perhaps, would, said the other; but they were, after all, a mere handful; and the poor white trash would be as flocks of sheep.

A Yankee wouldn't fight! And why not, pray? Two bulls will, meeting in a path; two dogs, over a bone. The fishes of the sea fight; the birds of the air; nay, do not even the little midgets, warmed by the slanting rays of the summer's sun, rend one another with infinitesimal tooth and microscopic nail? All nature is but one vast battle-field; and if the nations of men seem at times to be at peace, what is that peace but taking breath for another grapple? And congresses and kings are but bottle-holders, and time will be called in due season. The Yankees wouldn't fight! And suppose they wouldn't, why should they, pray, being sensible men?

Where was the Almighty Dollar?

Had any one of the Southern leaders read one page of history, not to know that money means men? means cannon, rifles, sabres? means ships, and commissariat, and clothing? means rallying from reverses, and victory in the end? The Yankee would not fight, they told us. His omnipotent ally they forgot to mention or to meet. Had our Congress consisted of bankers, merchants, railway superintendents, they would have seen to the gathering of the sinews of war. We had only the statesmen of the period,—God save the mark!

It was in finance that we blundered fatally. 'Twas not the eagle of the orator that overcame us, but the effigy thereof, in silver and in gold.

When we fired on Fort Sumter there was a burst of patriotism throughout the North, and her young men flocked to her standards. They fought, and fought well. The difference between them and us was, that when they got tired of poor fare and hard knocks they could find others to take their places. Being sensible, practical men, they used their opportunities. When a man was drafted (as the war went on) he or his friends found the means of hiring a substitute (persons who have visited the North since the war tell me that you rarely find a man of means who served in the army); and at last cities and counties and States began to meet each successive call for fresh troops by votes of money; their magnificent bounty system grew up, and from that time the composition of the Northern armies rapidly changed. Trained soldiers from every part of the world flocked to the El Dorado of the West; and as the war went on each successive battle brought less and less grief to the hearts and homes of the North, while with us—with us!

From every corner of Europe they poured.

From Italy, from Sweden, from Russia, and from Spain.

From the Danube and the Loire; from the marshy borders of the Elbe and the sunny slopes of the Guadalquivir.

From the Alps and the Balkan. From the home of the reindeer and the land of the olive. From Majorca and Minorca, and from the Isles of Greece.

From Berlin and Vienna; from Dublin and from Paris; from the vine-clad hills of the Adriatic and the frozen shores of the Baltic Sea.

From Skager Rack and Skater Gat, and from Como and Killarney.

From sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain, from the banks and braes o' bonny Doon, and from Bingen-on-the-Rhine.

Catholic and Calvinist; Teuton, Slav, and Celt,—who was not there to swell that host, and the babel of tongues around their camp-fires? For to every hut in Europe, where the pinch of want was known, had gone the rumor of fabulous bounty and high pay now, generous pension hereafter.

At Bull Run the North met the South; at Appomattox Lee laid down his sword in the presence of the world in arms.

CHAPTER LXXI.

AND Gordon? What did he see, standing on Massanutten's crest?

They lay there, beyond Cedar Creek, the Eighth Corps, the Nineteenth Corps and the Sixth; and, further away, the heavy masses of their cavalry; spread out before him, forty or fifty thousand strong.

Like a map. "I can distinguish the very chevrons of that sergeant," said he.

And now he bends his eyes on Fisher's Hill.

Those men lying there were beaten at Winchester, one month ago. Against brigade Early can bring regiment, against division, brigade; can oppose division to corps. And yet he is going to hurl this little handful against that mighty host.

A mere handful; but hearts of English oak! The ancestors of these men fought and won at Crecy and

Agincourt; and they are going to fight and lose at Cedar Creek. The result was different,—but the odds and the spirit were the same.

Have I forgotten the brigade of Louisiana creoles? No; but when I would speak of them, a certain indignant sorrow chokes my utterance. They came to us many and they went away few; and the Valley has been made historic by their blood, mingled with ours.

And now is heard the voice of one, speaking as with authority,—the voice of a Louisianian, proclaiming to the world that these Louisianians died in an unjust cause. Unjust! It is a word not to be used lightly. *Your* share of the obloquy, living comrades, you can bear; but *theirs*? For they are not here to speak for themselves.

And to say it to their widows and their orphans!

That word could not help the slave. *He* is free, thank heaven. Nor was the war in which these men died waged to free him. He was freed to wage the war, rather, as everybody knew when the proclamation of emancipation was promulgated. In point of fact, the struggle was between conflicting interpretations of the Constitution; and the Northern people, by a great and successful war, established their view of its obligations; the freedom of the slave being a corollary of victory.

Unjust! had it not been as well to leave that word to others? 'Tis an ill bird that fouls its own nest.

The war wrought wide ruin; but it has been a boon to the South in this, at least: that it has jostled our minds out of their accustomed grooves. Bold thinking has come to be the fashion. And so we should not find fault with the author of Doctor Sevier, if, dazzled by the voluptuous beauty of quadroon and octoroon, he should find a solution of our race troubles in intermarriage. Let him think his little thought. Let him say his little say. It will do no harm. On one question he will find, I think, a "solid" North and a "solid" South. Both are content to choose their wives from among the daughters of that great Aryan race which boasts so many illustrious women; and

which boasts still more the millions of gentle mothers and brave wives, whose names the trump of fame has never sounded. And with such, I think, both the blue and the gray are likely to rest content. Content, too, that their children, like themselves, should be of that pure Indo-Germanic stock whence has sprung a Socrates and a Homer; a Cæsar and a Galileo; a Descartes and a Pascal; a Goethe and a Beethoven; a Newton and a Shakespeare. The countrymen of Cervantes and of Cortez, failing to keep their blood pure, have peopled a continent with Greasers and with Gauchos.* And shall the children of Washington become a nation of Pullman car porters—and octoroon heroines—be their eyes never so lustrous?

But such matters are legitimate subjects of discussion. So let him have his say. But there *are* things which it is more seemly to leave unsaid.

When a step-mother is installed in the house, you may think her vastly superior, if you will, with her velvets and her laces and her diamonds, to her that bore you; and you may, perhaps, win fame as an original thinker by saying so to the world; but there is a certain instinct of manhood that would seal the lips of most men. And I, for my part, know many, very many Northern men; and not one of them seems to wish to have me grovel in the dust and cry peccavi. Would it not have been a disgrace to *them* to have spent, with all their resources and odds, four years in subduing a race of snivellers? No; let us say to the end: you were right in fighting for your country, we equally right in battling for ours. The North will, the North does respect us all the more for it.

As I read these words, Charley rose, and, opening a book-case, took out a volume. Finding, apparently, the passage he sought, he closed the book upon his forefinger.

"When a man takes upon himself," he began, "to rise up before Israel to confess and make atonement

* I do not forget the admirable men of pure Castilian blood to be found throughout Spanish America. But their very superiority accentuates the argument.—J. B. W.

for the sins of the people, he should be quite sure that he has the right to exercise the functions of high-priest.

"If either his father or his mother, for example, sprang from the region roundabout Tyre and Sidon, that should bid him pause. It is not enough that one wields the pen of a ready writer. One must be an Hebrew of the Hebrews. Else the confession goes for naught.

"What Jack has just read," added he, "brought to my mind a passage which I have not thought of for ages. You must know, Alice, that after the death of Cyrus at the battle of Cunaxa, the Ten Thousand made a truce with Tissaphernes, lieutenant of Artaxerxes, who agreed to conduct them back to Greece. After journeying together for some time, he invited the Greek generals to a conference at his headquarters. Clearchus and almost all of the leading officers accepted the invitation, and at a given signal were seized and murdered.

"The Ten Thousand were in as bad plight as ever an army was. Without leaders, confronted by a countless host, they had either to surrender or cut their way through a thousand miles of hostile territory.

"Xenophon, though not an officer, called an assembly, and soon aroused a stern enthusiasm. Speech after speech was made, and no one uttered other than brave words, except a certain Apollonides; and he cried out that the others spoke nonsense,—that the safe and profitable thing to do was to grovel before the Great King. Xenophon replied in a sarcastic vein, ending as follows:

"It seems to me, oh men, that we should not admit this man into any fellowship with us, but that we should cashier him of his captaincy and put baggage upon his back, and use him as a beast of burden. For he is a disgrace to his native land and to all Greece, since, being a Greek, he is such as he is.'

"And thereupon, Agasias, the Stymphalian, taking up the discourse, said, 'But this man is not a Greek; for I see that, like a Lydian, he has both his ears bored.'

"And such was the fact. Him, therefore, they cast out."

CHAPTER LXXII.

It is not my purpose to describe the battle of Cedar Creek. Even of the rôle played by Gordon's division, of which the present writer formed, according to Alice, a large part, I shall give no detailed account; for my object is not so much to instruct military men as to entertain my fair reader.

Three simultaneous attacks were to be made. Rosser, advancing along the "Back-road," far away to our left, was to swoop down, with his cavalry, upon that of the enemy. Kershaw and Wharton were to attack his centre; Gordon, with Ramseur and Pegram, to turn and assault his left.

At eight o'clock, therefore, in the evening of October 18, 1864, our men, rising from around their camp-fires and buckling on their accoutrements, took up their line of march. The enemy was miles away, yet they spoke in undertones; for their instinct told them that they were to surprise him. Their very tread as they moved along was in a muffled rhythm, as it seemed to me, and their canteens gave forth a dim jingle, as of sheep-bells, by night, from a nodding flock on a distant hill.

Leaving the pike and turning to the right, we (Gordon's command) at one time marched down a country road, at another straggled, single-file, along bridle-paths, at times fought our way through briers and amid jagged rocks as we toiled along under the shadow of Massanutten.

At last, when the night was wellnigh spent, we stacked arms in a field. The shining Shenandoah murmured just in front of us. We talked almost in whispers.

Suddenly the notes of a bugle, faint, far away, broke the stillness of the night. The enemy's cavalry at Front Royal were sounding the reveille. We held our breath,—had they divined our intentions?

The bugle-call to our right had scarcely died away, when, from far away to our left, the rattle of carbines was heard, low and soft, as though one dreamt of battle! 'Twas Rosser. Unfortunately, he had found a portion of the enemy in the saddle and ready to march, though not expecting an attack.

Just then the clanking of sabres and the trampling of hoofs was heard close beside us; and turning, we saw a squadron of our cavalry moving upon the ford. A thick mist had begun to rise, and as they rode through it they seemed colossal phantoms rather than earthly horsemen. A few moments, and the crack of carbine-shots was heard. The enemy's videttes retired, and our horsemen dashed across the stream. We followed, and formed in a field beyond the river.

The mist thickened with the approach of day. You could scarcely see a man thirty feet away. Captain Smith had deployed his skirmishers. As he stood near me, waiting for the word forward, a terrific rattle of musketry burst upon our ears, coming from our left. It was Kershaw, we knew. And then the cannon began to roar. Kershaw had left his artillery behind him. Had they been ready to receive him, and were the cannon and rifles of an entire corps mowing down his gallant little division? It was an appalling moment!

The word was given, and Captain Smith and his skirmishers dashed into the wood at a double-quick. We followed, and soon the air was filled with the roar of wide-spread battle. The cannon that we had heard, as we soon learned, were captured guns that Kershaw had turned upon the enemy. His division had rushed up a steep hill and put a corps to flight. Between us, we had soon driven, in headlong rout from their camps, the Eighth and the Nineteenth Corps. The Sixth remained, but we could not see it, so dense was the mist. Our assault slackened, ceased.

What would have been the result had we pushed on it is needless, now, to inquire. Desultory firing continued till about four o'clock in the afternoon, when Sheridan, who was at Winchester when the battle be-

gan, having galloped up, rallied thousands of the fugitives, and adding them to the Sixth Corps and his heavy force of cavalry, attacked and routed us in turn.

There were those who said that Early, if he did not choose to continue the attack (the most brilliant movement of the war, I think), should have withdrawn his troops, and not held them there, in an open plain, with greatly superior forces in his immediate front. He himself, smarting under defeat, attributed the disaster to the fact that his men, scattering through the captured camps, were engaged in plundering instead of being at their posts; and his words have been quoted by our friends the enemy. But I think that a moment's reflection will dispel this idea. Our hungry men, pursuing the enemy, and coming upon their sutlers' wagons, did undoubtedly snatch up such edibles as came in their way; but this occurred at day-break, and we were not attacked till four o'clock in the afternoon. I remember that I myself, espying a fat leg of mutton (of which some farmer had been robbed), laid hands on it with a view to a royal supper when the battle should be over; and, by brandishing it over my head, like a battle-axe, caused much laughter in the ranks. What became of it I cannot recall. I know I did not eat it; but I know, too, that my seizing it had no influence on the fortunes of the day.

The truth is, our defeat requires no explanation or apology from our brave old general. When Sheridan attacked us, he brought against our thin, single line of jaded men, overwhelming masses of fresh troops, assaulting our front, and, at the same time, turning both our flanks. I remember that Gordon's men, who held the left of our line, did not give way till bodies of the enemy had marched entirely around our flank, and began to pour deadly and unanswered volleys into our backs.

One more word and I am done with the battle as such.

Captain Smith, in his letter to Major Frobisher, found it impossible to understand why our army was not entirely destroyed at Winchester. I, on the contrary,

can explain how it was that we were not annihilated at Cedar Creek.

When the enemy, in their pursuit, reached Strasburg, and saw, below them, slowly retreating along the road to Fisher's Hill, a dark mass of troops, they called a halt. That halt saved our army. I can hardly repress a smile now, when I remember that that serried phalanx which looked so formidable, and gave the enemy pause, consisted of fifteen hundred Federal prisoners, guarded by a few hundred of our men. But the eccentric strategy of that halt, instead of being comic, was, in truth, fearfully tragic; for it protracted the defence of Richmond, and delayed the close of the war till the following spring, and cost the lives of thousands of brave men on both sides.

So much for the battle of Cedar Creek. Such slight sketch of it as I have given has cost me more pain than it can give the reader pleasure. Not willingly did I introduce it into my story.

That story grows sombre. It opened bright and joyous as the sunny nook of Earth in which my earlier scenes were laid. But between my hero and the land he helped to defend there is a parallelism of fortunes. The shadow of the same fate hangs over both.

Adag

Flauti.

Oboi.

Clarineti
in B.

Fagotti.

Corno I. u. II.
in C.

Corno III.
in Es.

Trombe
in C.

Timpani
in C. G.

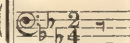
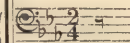
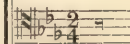
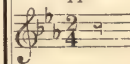
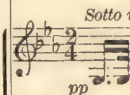
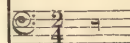
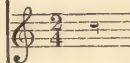
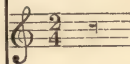
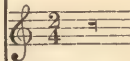
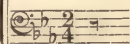
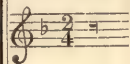
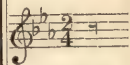
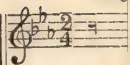
Violino I.

Violino II.

Viola.

Violoncello.

Basso.



SYMPHONY OF LIFE.

MOVEMENT IV.

MARCIA FUNEBRE.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

DURING the night of this 18th of October, while we were making our toilsome advance upon the enemy, a Virginia soldier, wounded in the battle of Winchester, lay in a small room of a house in the edge of Middletown; around which village the battle of Cedar Creek was chiefly fought. Upon some bedding, spread upon the floor, lay a young woman, his cousin; who, having heard that he had been hard hit, had made her way to the enemy's pickets, and, after some parleying, gained permission to pass within their lines and nurse her wounded relative. This young woman had, since the beginning of the war, passed her life, as one might say, in our hospitals. But her present position, within the enemy's lines, was a trying one. It so happened that between the Federal officer who occupied a room in the same house and herself a strong antipathy soon grew up. The little nurse was too busy attending to the wants of her wounded cousin to leave his side often; but being under the same roof with the Federal officer, they met, in a casual manner, not infrequently. These meetings he contrived to make very disagreeable, by continually attempting to force political discussions upon her. But she, on her side, managed to render them far more exasperating to him.

He that would get the better of a woman had best finish her with a club at once and be done with it; he

is sure to get the worst of it in a tongue-battle. It may be a washerwoman opening on you with Gatling-gun invective, and sweeping you from the face of the earth; or a dainty society belle, with a dropping sharpshooter fire of soft-voiced sarcasm,—in either case you shall wish that you had held your peace.

And so this big Federal colonel never had an encounter with the little rebel nurse but he gnashed his teeth and raged for hours afterwards. She always contrived, in the subtlest way, and without saying so, to make him feel that she did not look upon him as a gentleman. One day, for example, he had been carefully explaining to her in how many ways the Northern people were superior to the Southern.

"But I don't believe," added he, with evident acrimony, "that you F. F. V.'s think there is one gentleman in the whole North. This arrogance on your part is really one main cause of the war."

"I can readily believe you,—for I understand the feeling. But really you do us an injustice. I know, personally, a number of Northern gentlemen. In New York, for instance" (the colonel was from that city), "I am acquainted with the — family and the —s and the —s, do you know them?"

The colonel hesitated.

"No?" said she, in soft surprise. "Ah, you should lose no time in making their acquaintance on your return to the city. They are very nice. But I hear my patient calling. Good-day!"

The colonel knew, and he saw plainly that she knew, that he could no more enter one of those houses than he could fly. He could not answer her. All that was left him was to hate her, and this he did with his whole heart; and all aristocrats, living and dead.

When the crash of battle burst forth, on the morning of the nineteenth, the colonel hurried forth to form his regiment. He met his men rushing pell-mell to the rear, and he ran back to his headquarters to gather a few things that lay scattered about his room. Although the bullets were flying thick, frequently striking the house itself, he found the little nurse standing on the

porch, exultation in every feature. The whizzing of the rifle-balls seemed sweet to her ears. Confederate bullets would not hurt *her*.

"Get out of my way," said he, in a gruff voice. "This is no place for women."

"Nor for men, either, you seem to think!"

He gave her a black look.

"Why this unseemly haste, colonel?" said she, following him into the hall. "What! through the back door? The Confederates are *there*!" And she stabbed the air in the direction of the coming bullets with a gesture that would have made the fortune of a tragedy queen.

"Take that, d—n you!" And he brought his open hand down upon her cheek with such force that, reeling through the open door of her room, she fell headlong upon the floor.

"Coward!" roared a voice from the threshold of the hall.

Rising to her knees and turning, she saw the colonel spring forward with a fierce glare in his eyes and a cocked pistol in his extended hand. She shut her eyes and stopped her ears.

Had he killed the Confederate? No, for she heard no fall; but the clear ring, instead, of a sabre drawn quickly from its scabbard. The colonel stepped across the threshold of the room in which she was, cocking his pistol for another shot. He raised the weapon,—but she heard a spring in the hall, and saw a flash of steel; and the colonel fell at full length upon the floor, with a sword-blade buried up to the hilt in his breast. With such terrific force had the thrust been delivered that he was knocked entirely off his feet, and the whole house shook.

"Δούπησεν δὲ πεσών, ἀράβησε δὲ τεύχε' ἐπ' αὐτῷ,"* muttered the victor, as the young woman, springing to her feet, threw her arms around his neck and kissed him.

"My brave defender!" cried she, in a fervor of patriotic exaltation, lifting her eyes to his; and then she sprang back with a shiver, and stood breathless

* He fell with a crash, and his arms rattled upon him. (The Homeric formula when a warrior falls.)

before him, her head bowed upon her breast, her face ashy pale.

A scene within a scene.

Without, the roar of cannon, the incessant rattle of musketry, the bursting of shells, the panic-stricken rush of riderless horses, the tramp of hurrying men, the Rebel Yell sweeping by like a tornado, shouts of victory, moans of the dying.

Within, four people for a moment oblivious of all this mad hurly-burly that billowed around them.

The convalescent soldier, rising upon his elbow, looked with silent amazement upon the crouching figure of his fair cousin; while the dying Union soldier forgot, for a moment, his gaping wound as he gazed upon the man who had inflicted it. Tall, broad-shouldered, gaunt of flank, supple, straight as an Indian, he held in his right hand the gory sword, from which the prostrate officer saw his own life-blood trickling, drop by drop, upon the floor. In his left he held his cap uplifted.

Attila and Monsieur Deux-pas in one!

With cap uplifted; but head thrown back and eyes averted. His right shoulder and breast were soaked with blood, which was streaming down his brown beard upon his coat, from a bullet-hole in his bronzed cheek. But it was his eyes which riveted the attention of his fallen enemy. He had been appalled by their fierce glare, when, angered by the pistol-shot, he had sprung upon him in the hall. But that look had been soft compared with the cold, steady, pitiless gleam they poured forth now. That man, thought he, would not give a cup of water to a dying enemy.

Captain Smith made two steps towards the door, and turning, bowed.

Feeling that he was going (for she had not dared to raise her eyes), Mary Rolfe quivered for a moment from head to foot; then springing forward, with passionate entreaty in every gesture and a cry of anguish upon her lips:

"And you will leave me without a word? Listen! How frightfully the battle is raging! And you are so

cruel, cruel, as to go forth, and die, perhaps, without ever— I know you will be killed, I know it, I know it! And you won't say you forgive me! Won't you say just that one little word? You loved me once,—and dearly, for you pressed me against your heart and told me so; and can that heart, once so tender, be so hard now? Oh, say you forgive me; for the sake of that dear, dead love, say you forgive your little Mary!"

And round about them the battle roared and surged and thundered.

Her cousin has told me that such was the pathos and passion of her tones, her looks, her gestures, as she uttered these words (which hardly seemed unconventional in their fearful setting), that the eyes of the dying soldier grew moist. But Captain Smith, standing like a granite cliff:

"There is nothing to forgive. You did your duty as you saw it. So did I when I ran that officer through. —Ah, pardon me: I had forgotten you. Can I do anything for you?" added he in a tender voice, as he kneeled beside him.

"Unbutton my coat, please; I am choking."

The captain shuddered as he saw the broad gash in the breast of his enemy. "I am sorry I hit you so hard."

"It is all right," replied he, wearily. "I tried to kill you, and you killed me, that's all. But thank you for your kind words."

The captain's eyes filled with tears. "I hope it is not as bad as you think. I'll send you a surgeon immediately. Meanwhile, keep up your spirits." And taking the wounded man's hand in his, he pressed it softly. Then, rising, "Good-by," said he, with a cheering smile, and moved towards the door.

It was then that Mary, catching, for the first time, a view of the right side of his face, saw the blood trickling down his cheek.

"You are wounded already," she cried in terror.

"Yes; wounded beyond healing," said the captain of the Myrmidons; and with a cold bow, he passed out of the door and into the tempest of the battle.

"Oh—oh—oh!" gasped Mary, wringing her interlocked hands high above her head; and she sank slowly down upon the floor.

The measures fashioned by the hands of men can hold but so much; but anguish without limit may be pent up within a human heart that is bursting, yet will not burst.

The officer turned his eyes, and, even in his own great extremity, pitied her.

And, after all, which of the two was most to be pitied?

He was about to speak a few kind words, when he saw upon her pallid cheek the dark bruises made by his own heavy hand; and he held his peace. His lips were parched, his throat tortured with that cruel thirst that loss of blood entails. His wounded neighbor could not, *she* would not hand him a cup of water. At any rate, it were worthier to die there, where he lay, rather than ask a favor of the woman he had so insulted. Three times he tried to rise, and as often fell heavily back. She raised her head and saw the longing, wistful look in his eyes, fixed upon a bucket which stood in a corner of the room.

It is wonderful how sorrow softens the heart!

She rose in an instant and brought him the cup. He could not lift his head. Bending over him, she placed her arm beneath his neck and raised him. As he drank, the tears poured down his cheeks. Gently withdrawing her arm, she tripped softly across the room and brought her own pillow and placed it beneath his head; and sitting down upon the floor, by his side, stroked his brown forehead with her soft white hand. He raised his streaming eyes to hers, and again and again essayed to speak; but his quivering lips refused to obey.

"I know what you would say; so never mind. Don't worry now. You may beg my pardon when you get well."

He shook his head sadly. "I am dying now,—I feel it."

His voice sank into a whisper. She bent over him to catch his words.

"Promise me to write to my mother and tell her how I died, and that you sat beside me. Leave out one thing. It would break her heart to hear that of me. You will? God bless you. Her address is in my pocket. Write to her. You promise? Oh, how good of you to hold the very hand that—"

"Hush! Don't talk of that now."

"You won't have to hold it long. I feel it coming, coming. Press my hand hard, harder! You have forgiven me! Tell her, that as I lay—dying—far away from home—an angel—of light—"

CHAPTER LXXIV.

IF only night would come!

They were pouring down upon us and around us in overwhelming masses. They had turned our left, and were raking Gordon's flank and rear. It was a question of a few minutes only.

In our front was a narrow field. Beyond that, a wood. Through this the enemy were driving our skirmishers back upon the main line. One by one these brave men emerged from the wood and trotted briskly across the field, targets, every one of them, for a dozen rifles.

There come two more! They are the last. But they do not trot, as the rest did and as skirmishers should.

Upon those two, convergent rifles from all along the line of the wood poured a rain of lead. Still they refused to hurry. And one was tall and bearded, and the other slender, and with a face as smooth as a girl's. The boy, as fast as he loaded his rifle, wheeled and fired; the man carried a pistol in his hand. Weeds fell about them, mowed down by the bullets; spurts of dust leaped from under their very feet.

The few men left in our line stood, under cover of a thin curtain of trees, fascinated by the sight of these

two, leisurely stalking along, under that murderous fire.*

"Run, run!" we shouted.

"Run!" cried Captain Smith, giving the shoulder of his companion a push.

"And leave my commander!" replied Edmund.

"Stoop, then!"

"Show me how, captain!"

"Obey me!" thundered he.

The boy lowered his head, as he rammed a bullet home; then turned, and, cocking his rifle, scanned the opposite wood narrowly. Presently he raised his rifle; but before he could fire we heard that terrible sound which old soldiers know so well.

"Oh!" cried the boy, falling upon his face.

"My God! my God!" ejaculated the captain of the Myrmidons, with a woman's tenderness in his voice and the despair of Laocoön in his corrugated brow.

Hearing that cry, the boy turned quickly and smiled in his captain's face. "It is only a flesh-wound, through the thigh," said he; "I can walk, I think."

He was attempting to rise, when his captain, placing his strong arms beneath him, lifted him high in the air. He ran, then; and his face was full of terror, as the thick-flying bullets whistled past him and his burden. The two were within a few paces of where I stood, when again that terrific sound was heard; and they both fell heavily at my very feet.

A bullet, coming from our flank and rear, had struck Captain Smith in the right breast.

It was a wound in front, at any rate.

There was but one ambulance-wagon in sight, and that was retreating. A skirmisher ran to overtake it. Others placed the captain and Edmund on stretchers and hurried after it.

"Jack, old boy, good-by. I am done for; but I particularly desire to get within our lines; so hold them in check as long as you can. Say farewell to Charley."

* *Meis ipsius vidi oculis.*

A few of his own men held their ground till they saw their captain and Edmund disappear, in the wagon, over the hill, when they fell back, loading and firing as they went. When the wagon reached the bridge beyond Strasburg, it was found broken down; but the men with the stretchers managed to get our two wounded friends across the stream, and to find another wagon; so, the pursuit slackening at this juncture, they were not captured.

Late in the night, I found them by the road-side. Edmund was asleep. The captain lay awake, watched by one of his brave skirmishers. He gave messages to my grandfather, to Charley and Alice, to the Poy-thresses. "And now, good-night," said he. "You need rest. Throw yourself down by that fire and go to sleep. Don't bother about me. I shall set out for Harrisonburg at daybreak."

"The ride will kill you."

He smiled faintly. "I must get well within our lines. Remember—Harrisonburg—good-night!" And he closed his eyes and wearily turned his face away. "Shelton!"

The skirmisher bent tenderly over his captain.

"Lie down by the fire and sleep. You cannot help me. God alone can do that, and he will release me from my sufferings before many days. Shelton, give me your hand. Tell your little boy, when he grows up, that I said you were as brave as a lion in battle; and tell your wife that you could be as gentle as a woman to a suffering comrade. And now lie down and rest. Good-night!"

"Presently, captain."

"What are you crying about, man? Such things will happen. Good-night!"

CHAPTER LXXV.

LET us return to that little parlor on Leigh Street, from the windows of which, four years ago, we caught our first glimpse of the man who has played so large a part in our story. It is full of people, now,—half a dozen elderly men, all the rest women. Of the men, one is a minister, with a face so singularly gentle that his smile is a sort of subdued sunbeam.

The countenances of the women all wear looks of happy expectancy. Mr. and Mrs. Poythress are there, and Lucy. Mr. and Mrs. Rolfe, but not Mary. And others whom the reader, to her cost, does not know. Our plump friend, Mrs. Carter, is bustling about, who but she, her jolly face wreathed in smiles.

At every sound in the hall, every female neck is craned towards the door. Somebody or something is expected.

"Mrs. Carter," said Mrs. Poythress, "what name has Alice selected for the little man?"

"Oh, yes! what is to be his name?" echoed every lady in the room.

Thereupon, Mrs. Carter, being constitutionally incapable of laughing, began to shake.

At this eccentric behavior on the part of the young grandmother, curiosity rose to fever heat; but the more they plied her with questions, the more she could not answer. Seeing her incapable of speech, her grave and silent husband came to the rescue, and explained that what amused Mrs. Carter was that she did not know what their grandchild was to be called. It appeared that Alice, as a reward for his getting well of his wound, had allowed Charley the privilege of naming their son. He had accepted the responsibility,—but no mortal, not even his wife, had been able to make him say what the name was to be.

This statement sent the curiosity of the audience up to the boiling point. Did you ever!

Mrs. Rolfe interrogated Mr. Rolfe with her impressive eyes.

"Such a fancy would never have occurred to me, I'm sure," said that man of peace.

"Al-i-ce!" called Mrs. Carter, from the foot of the stairs.

"We are coming, mother," answered a cheery voice from the hall above; and Alice, giving two or three final little jerks at the ends of certain ribbons and bits of lace that adorned her boy (he was asleep on his nurse's shoulder), stood aside to let that dignitary pass down-stairs, at the head of the procession.

"And now," said Alice, going up to her husband, "what is his name to be?"

"One that he will never have cause to be ashamed of," replied Charley.

Alice drew back in surprise. Up to this point she had looked upon the thing as a joke, and enjoyed it, too, as so characteristic of her husband. This time, however, he had not smiled, as usual. On the contrary, he betrayed, both in voice and look, a certain suppressed excitement. She imagined, even, that he was a trifle pale; and her heart began to flutter a little, she knew not why.

The column halted when it reached the closed parlor door. Here Charley took the sleeping boy in his arms.

When the audience within heard the knob rattle, the excitement was intense. It was dissipated, in an instant, by the sight of Charley bearing the child.

In this wide world there lives not a woman who can look upon a bearded man, with his first infant in his arms, without smiling.

The admiring ohs and ahs made the young mother's heart beat high with joy. And who shall call her weak, because she forgot that they are to be heard at every christening? In the name of pity, let us sip whatever illusive nectar chance flowers along our stony path may afford!

Every one noticed how awkward Charley was in handing the baby to the minister; while the good man,

on the contrary, received an ovation of approving smiles for his skill in holding him.

The little fellow, himself, appeared to feel the difference. He nestled, at any rate, against the comfortable shoulder, and threw his head back; and his little twinkling nose, pointing heavenward, seemed to say that he knew what it all meant.

"Name this child!"

"Ah-ah-ah-ah!"

Every neck was craned, every ear eager to catch the first mysterious syllable!

Alice glanced anxiously at her husband.

Why that determined look? What was he going to do?

A lightning-flash darted through her brain! Charley's mother's father was named Peter! He had been a man of mark in his day; and, besides, Charley worshipped his mother's memory. Peter! Horrors! And then he stammers so over his P's! That half-defiant look, too!

Charley leaned forward.

She could not hear what he said; but she saw, from the obstinate recusancy of his lips, that there was a P in the name. She felt a choking in her throat.

'Twas her first,—and Peter! And he knew how painfully absurd she thought the name! Poor little innocent babe! Peter! Her eyes filled with tears.

No one had heard the name; not even the minister. He bent an inquiring look upon Charley.

Charley repeated the words.

This time the good man heard, though no one else did. Bringing his left arm around in front of his breast, he dipped his right hand into the water, and raised it above the head of the sleeping boy.

Alice's heart stood still!

"Theodoric Poythress, I baptize thee—"

A gasp of surprise, followed by a stifled moan, startled minister and people; and all eyes were turned towards the Poythress group.

Mrs. Poythress lay with her head upon her husband's breast, silent tears streaming from her closed eyes.

Lucy, half-risen from her seat, leaned over her mother, holding her hand, deep compassion in her gentle eyes. Her father sat bolt upright, looking stern, in his effort to appear calm. Her mother pressed Lucy gently back into her chair, and the minister went on.

Hurried leave-takings followed the ceremony. The baby was awake and gurgling, but nobody noticed him; not even his mother. Mrs. Poythress did not stir.

The front door was heard to close.

"Lucy, are they all gone?"

"Yes, mother."

She opened her eyes, and seeing Charley standing, silent, by the side of his wife, rose and staggered towards him, with outstretched arms. He ran to meet her; and she folded him to her breast with a long, convulsive embrace; then dropped into a chair, without a word, and covered her face with one hand, while she held one of his with the other.

First, Lucy thanked Charley, and then Mr. Poythress, coming up, and taking Charley's hand in both his: "My boy, you are as true as steel,—I thank you." And he strode stiffly out into the hall.

And instantly, as Alice's quick eye noticed, the cloud which had lingered on her husband's brow vanished. He drew a long, deep breath, and turning with a bright smile, chucked young Theodoric under the chin. "How do you like your name, young fellow?"

The corners of the young fellow's mouth made for his ears, then snapped together beneath his nose.

"Your views vary with kaleidoscopic rap-p-p-pidity," remarked the philosopher.

The son of the philosopher crowed.

"He says he rather likes his name," said Charley; "but," added he, drawing his handkerchief from his pocket, "those drops of water, at the corners of his eyes, look too much like—"

"Hush!" cried Alice, quickly; and she laid her hand on her husband's mouth.

"*Absit omen!*" said he.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

ON the morning following this christening, the papers contained a telegraphic account of our defeat at Cedar Creek. And, late in the afternoon of the same day, Lucy Poythress walked into the Carters' back parlor. Her eyes were red and swollen.

"Have you any news?" asked Alice, anxiously.

"Here is a letter from Edmund."

"Then he is safe, thank God!"

"Not exactly. The poor child was shot through the thigh. Mr. Whacker is unhurt."

"And Captain Smith?"

Lucy's lips quivered.

"Not killed?" cried Alice, clasping her hands.

"No, but dangerously wounded,—*very*. Here is Edmund's letter to mother."

Alice read it aloud. He gave an account of the battle, making light of his own wound ("The rascals popped me in the second joint"), but represented his captain's as very serious. The captain had advised him to remain in Harrisonburg, but had himself gone to Taylor's Springs, four miles distant. As for himself, he was in luck.

"Who do you think is my nurse? Why, Miss Mary Rolfe! The battle caught her in Middletown, nursing a Confederate soldier; and when, in the afternoon, the enemy showed signs of an intention to attack, the captain sent me, with an ambulance-wagon, to Miss Mary. I was to tell her that in my opinion (that is what he told me to say) it would be safest for her to move her patient to the rear. And here she is now; and a gentler nurse no one ever had. He never mentioned her name to me; but she tells me that she knew him slightly, once. It is a pity he went off to Taylor's, for she would have nursed him, too, I am sure.

"He told me a lot of things to tell you about myself, but I shan't repeat them, as I don't think I be-

haved any better than hundreds of others that I saw around me. I could not help crying when they took him from his cot by my side; for from the way he told me good-by, I saw that he did not expect ever to see me again. No brother was ever kinder than he has been to me. The last thing he said to me was to give his *dear, dear love* to you. (those were his words), and to say that he relied on you to keep your promise. I asked him what promise, but he said never mind, she will remember."

In conclusion, Edmund besought his mother to come on to see him. Miss Mary was as good as could be, but, after all, one's mother was different, etc., etc., etc.

"What promise could he have alluded to?" asked Alice.

"That is just what I asked mother," said Lucy. "Do you believe in presentiments, Alice? I do; and when mother told me what her promise to the Don was" (here Charley, who had not spoken a word, rose and left the room), "I was filled with dreadful forebodings. You know that during the latter part of his stay down in the country, before joining the army, the Don spent a great deal of his time with us. One afternoon we were taking a little stroll, before tea, Mr. Frobisher walking with me, and, some distance behind us, the Don, with mother. She stopped at our family cemetery to set out some plants; and she tells me that it was on this occasion that she made him the promise in question.

"She says that when she pointed out to him the spot that she had selected for her own resting-place, he looked down for some time, and then said that he had a favor to ask her.

" 'I am to join the army, next week,' said he.

" 'Well?' said she.

" 'There is no fighting without danger,' said he. 'Suppose I should fall?'

" 'Oh, I hope not!' said mother.

" 'Yes; but in case I do? This, you say, is the spot you have chosen for yourself. If I fall—would you give me two yards of earth just here, at your feet? I

would not be in the way there, would I?" Mother makes a longer story of it, and an affecting one. When she gave him her word (mother took the greatest fancy to the Don from the first day she saw him) she says he was more deeply moved than she should have thought it possible for a big, strong man to be by such a thing. This is the promise he alludes to; and I have a painful presentiment that—"

"Mr. Frobisher recovered from an equally severe wound."

"Yes, I know; but—"

"Miss Alice," said a servant, entering the parlor, "there is a soldier at the door, who wants to speak to Marse Charley."

Alice, going into the hall, found a man standing there. He was in his shirt-sleeves as to his right arm, which was bound in splints.

"Do you wish to see Major Frobisher?"

"Yes, ma'am; I have a letter for him."

"You may give it to me; I am his wife."

"Beggin' your pardon, ma'am, my orders was to give it to him, and nobody else."

"Very well. Won't you come in and have something to eat?"

"Thank you, ma'am; I shouldn't mind a bite, if it wasn't too much trouble."

"Walk in and sit down while the servant is getting something for you. You look tired. I hope your arm is not much hurt."

"Well, sort o'. They broke it for me at Cedar Creek; but I got a furlough by it, and can see my wife and children; so tain't worth mentionin'."

"Cedar Creek! Do you know Captain Smith? How is he?"

"He is my captain, ma'am, and he was the one what writ the letter. He is pretty bad, I am afeard."

"This is Major Frobisher," said Alice, as Charley entered the room. Charley read the note and put it hurriedly into his pocket. After asking the man a few questions, he was about to leave the room:

"Won't you let me see it?" asked Alice.

"Not yet," said Charley; and thanking the soldier, he went up-stairs to his room.

Alice heard the key turn in the lock; and when she went up-stairs, later, to beg him to come down to tea, she did not find him in the room. An hour afterwards he came in, saying that he had been to see Mrs. Poythress,—that she was to set out for Harrisonburg in the morning, and that he was going with her.

It was in vain that Alice urged his weak condition. "A friend is a friend," he kept repeating. And so Alice set about packing his valise. Just as she had finished this little task the baby stirred; Alice went up to his crib and patted him till he thought better of it, and nestled down into his pillow again.

"Theodoric! I think it such a pretty name! The idea of my thinking you were going to call him Peter! Won't you tell me something of his namesake, Lucy's brother? Mother tells me that she vaguely remembers that there was some dreadful mystery about his loss, which occurred when I was about four years old; but she did not know the Poythresses at that time, and does not remember any of the details, if she ever knew them, in fact. Lucy, in explaining the scene at the christening yesterday, told me it was a long story, and a sad one, so I did not press her. But won't *you* tell me? You never tell me *anything*. Now be good, for once!"

Alice was bringing to bear upon her obdurate husband the battery of all her cajoleries, when, to her surprise, he surrendered at once.

"Yes," said he, "since our child is named in his honor, I will tell you the story of Theodoric Poythress."

In the next chapter that story will be found; though not in as colloquial a form as that in which Charley actually told it, and with most of Alice's interruptions omitted.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

"THEODORIC was the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Poythress. He was born on the 15th day of April, 1832, I on the 2d of the preceding March; so that I was his senior by six weeks. Our intimacy began when we were not more than six years old. Mr. Poythress had a tutor for Theodoric at that period, by whom half a dozen of the neighbors' sons were taught, myself among the number. I was put across the River every morning; but there was an understanding between my mother and Mrs. Poythress that whenever the weather grew threatening, I was to be allowed to spend the night with Theodoric. During the winter and early spring there was hardly a week that I did not pass at least one night with him; he, in turn, spending Friday night and Saturday with me. Ah, how happy we were! When two congenial boys are thrown together in that way, they get about as much out of life as is to be gotten at any other age. I can recall but one quarrel that we ever had; and that was when I said, one day, that my mother was, beyond doubt, the best woman in the world. We compromised the matter, in the end, by reciprocal admissions that the mother of each was best to him.

"I think few boys were ever better friends than we; and for the reason, no doubt, that we differed so. Even as a boy I had an indolent, easy-going way of taking things as they came. My anger, too, was hard to arouse, and as easy to appease; while his was sudden and fierce, and, I am sorry to add, implacable. And this is true generally, notwithstanding the proverb. It may be that people who give way to little gusts of temper soon forget their wrath; but my observation has taught me that unappeasable, undying resentment is always found associated with readiness to take offence. This, at any rate, was Theodoric's disposition."

"I trust," said Alice, "that our boy will not resemble him in that respect."

"I hope not. But that was the only serious defect in his character; in my partial eyes, at least. He was generous, chivalrous, truth itself, absolutely unselfish, and, withal, paradoxical as it may appear, as tender-hearted as a girl. I remember a little incident which shows this. One day, as we school-boys were racing about the lawn during recess, a wretched-looking man walked up to us and asked for food. He was the first beggar we had ever seen, and two or three of us ran into the kitchen and returned with enough for five men. While he ate, the drunken old humbug,—for such he proved to be,—taking advantage of our simplicity, wrought powerfully on our sympathies by recounting the tale of his woes. He had not tasted food for two days.

"Why did you not buy something to eat?" asked Theodoric, with quivering lip.

"I hadn't any money."

"Then why didn't you go home to your friends?"

"I ain't got no home and no friends."

"Whereupon Theodoric burst into a loud boohoo. Some of the boys began to titter; and I think I was just beginning to despise him, a little, as a cry-baby, when his mother, who stood near, threw her arms around him, and said, with brimming eyes and choking voice, 'God will remember these tears one day, my precious boy!'"

Alice rose, and, stealing softly to her baby, bent over and kissed him.

"You said, just now, that you hoped our boy would not resemble his namesake."

"I take that back."

"You will say so all the more when I have shown you what kind of a son he was to that mother."

"I believe that the English race surpasses all others in respect for woman; and I think that, of the English race, the Americans are superior to their brethren across the water in this regard. And I believe, too, that it will hardly be denied that, among Americans, Southerners are conspicuous for this virtue. And it seems to me that of respect for woman, the love for one's

mother is the very crown, and blossom, and glory. It means manliness, it means soul, it means a grateful heart. It is unwritten poetry; and if that be so, then the life of the boy after whom we have named our boy was one beautiful lyric.

"His mother had a great fund of fairy-tales and other stories, which she used to tell us after supper. I can see him now, sitting on a low stool at her feet,—he would never sit anywhere else,—with hands clasped over her knees, drinking in the story, while his eyes clung to the gentle face of the story-teller with a kind of rapt adoration. And such eyes! now flashing with fierce indignation at one turn of the story, now melting with tenderness at another!

"And she could never pass him without his throwing his arms around her and tip-toeing for a kiss. 'Another! another! another!' he kept pleading. 'Go away, you silly boy!' she would say; but more than once I caught her, behind the door, after one of these little scenes, wiping her eyes with her apron. And once, when Theodoric had left the room, and I, in my simplicity, asked her what was the matter, she burst into a sob. 'Nothing, my child,' she said; 'only, I am *too* happy.'

"It was hard—"

Charley rose and walked up and down the room three or four times.

"It was hard to lose such a boy as that!"

Alice was silent.

"His love for his mother was his religion. And this brings me to the sad part of my story.

"We Virginians are in the habit of denouncing New England puritanism; unaware, seemingly, that Virginia numbers among her people thousands of puritans."

Alice looked up, but said nothing.

"And how could it have been otherwise? Are not we, equally with the New Englanders, English? But, as the people who came over in the 'Mayflower' belonged to a different class of English society from those who sailed with Captain John Smith" (Charley stopped speaking for a moment, then went on), "our

puritanism has assumed a shape so different from that of Massachusetts, that we have failed to recognize it. The aristocratic element of our colonists was so strong and numerous, that it gave a tone to our society which it has never lost. And it is because the maxim that an Englishman's house is his castle has, among people of a certain social standing, a meaning far wider than its merely legal one, that puritanism never became blatant with us. Hence, though it exists among us,—often in the most intense form,—we have ignored it.”

Alice shook her head, slowly: “I can’t make out what you mean.”

“Well, then, to come to concrete examples,—Mr. Poythress.”

“Mr. Poythress!”

“There lives not a more intense puritan. You have failed to remark it, because he is a gentleman. That forbids his ramming his personal convictions down other people’s throats. He is a puritan for himself and his family only. Nothing could induce him to harbor a bottle of wine under his roof; but believing that every Virginian’s house is his castle, he is equally incapable of resenting its presence on the Elmington table. I have a story about him that you have never heard.

“Years ago, he gave up the use of liquors of all kinds. For some time, however, his guests were as liberally supplied as ever. But at last he gave a dinner at which only his rarest and most costly wines were brought on the table; so that some of the gentlemen even remonstrated at his pouring out, like water, Madeira that his father had imported. What was the gastronomic horror of these gentlemen to learn, a few days afterwards, that he had caused every barrel in his cellar to be rolled out on his lawn, where, with an axe in his own hands, he staved in the head of every one. From that day to this there has not been a gill of wine or brandy in his house. Yet, to mention the ‘Maine liquor law’ to him is to shake a red flag in the face of a bull. His aversion to drinking is great; but his love of personal liberty is greater.

“Again, would it surprise you to learn that not so

very many years ago, Mr. Poythress favored freeing our slaves?"

"Mr. Poythress an abolitionist!" cried Alice, in horrified amazement.

"No," replied Charley, smiling, "he was nothing of the kind. He was an emancipationist."

"I fail to see the difference."

"They are about as much alike as chalk and cheese. The Virginia emancipationists, of whom a considerable and growing party existed at the time of which I speak, favored the gradual manumission of their own slaves. An abolitionist is for freeing some one else's. Mr. Poythress quietly spilt his own valuable wine on his lawn. Had he been an abolitionist, he would have headed a mob to burst the barrels of his neighbors."

"Mr. Poythress an emancipationist,—well!"

"I don't wonder at your surprise; for he is now the most ardent advocate of slavery that I know. He positively pities all those benighted countries where it does not exist. The abolitionists have converted an enthusiastic apostle of emancipation into an ardent pro-slavery champion; so infuriated is he that the Northern people are unwilling for us to get rid of slavery as they did, and as the nations of Europe have done,—gradually, and without foreign interference; and a man who once looked upon the institution as a blot upon our civilization, now regards it as its crown of glory.

"I have given you these details that you may thoroughly understand what kind of a man Theodoric's father was. He was, in fact, a puritan in every fibre of his soul. He looked upon the world as a dark valley, through which we had to pass on our way to a better; and it seemed to him that any hilarity on the part of us poor wayfarers smacked of frivolity, to use the mildest term. Dancing he never allowed under his roof, and secular music he rated as a snare for the feet of the unwary. Therefore he shook his head with unaffected uneasiness when he discovered in Theodoric, at a very early age, a passionate love for this half-wicked form of noise. And so, when, year after year,

as Theodoric's birthday came round, and the boy, when asked what he wanted, always answered, a fiddle, his father put his foot down. At last, on his thirteenth birthday, a compromise was effected. Theodoric got a flute; an instrument which Mr. Poythress allowed to be as nearly harmless as any could be; at least to the performer. I had been piping away on one for a year, but he soon surpassed me. His progress pleased his mother, from whom, in fact, he had inherited his love for music; but his father looked upon the time spent practising as wasted. Conscious, therefore, that his flute annoyed his father, he hit upon a plan to give him as little of it as possible.

"In a little clump of trees, about a quarter of a mile from the house, he constructed a music-desk against an old tree; and thither he repaired, on all fair afternoons, and played to his heart's content, surrounded by an admiring audience of a dozen or so dusky adherents.

"It was this harmless flute that brought on the catastrophe that I shall presently relate.

"Mr. Poythress's religion, I need hardly tell you, was of the most sombre character. (I say *was*; for he is much changed since those days.) It is singular how extremes meet in everything. Puritanism among the Protestants, and asceticism in the Catholic Church, each seek, by making a hell of this world, to win heaven in the next. I have said that Theodoric frequently spent Saturday with me. He was never allowed to be absent from home on Sunday; and month by month, and year by year, as he grew older, those Sundays grew more and more intolerable to him. It was a firm hand that crammed religion down his throat, and, as a child, he was, if wretched, unresisting. But Theodoric was his father's own son. He too loved personal liberty. To be brief, the time came when he hated the very name of religion; and, when we were about thirteen years old, he often shocked me by his fierce irreverence. And, unfortunately, his parents had no suspicion of what was going on in his mind. His love for his mother, equally with his awe of his father, sealed his lips.

"There are those whose discontent is like damp powder burning. It sputters, flashes, smokes, but does not explode. But with Theodoric, everything was sudden, unexpected, violent. He had immense self-control; but it was that of a boiler, that at one moment is propelling a steamer, an instant later has shattered it. There was an element of the irrevocable and the irreparable in all that he did.

"It was, as I have said, the hard, relentless sabbatarianism of Mr. Poythress that bore hardest upon his son. And, when you think of it, what a curse sabbatarianism has been to the world! How the Protestants of England and America ever managed to ingraft it upon Christianity I could never understand; for not only is it without trace of authority in the New Testament, but the very founder of our religion never lost an opportunity of striking it a blow. And I can't help thinking, sometimes, that when he said, Suffer little children to come unto me, he said it in pity of their tortures on this one long, dreary day in every week. But I am getting away from my story.

"One Sunday—it was the first after Theodoric's fourteenth birthday—he complained of headache. He did not ask to be excused from going to church; but the day was warm, and the road long and dusty, and his mother begged him off; and the family coach went off without him. The party had gone but a few miles, when they learned that owing to the illness of the pastor there would be no service that day. So they turned about.

"At last, hoofs and wheels ploughing noiselessly through the heavy sand, they approached the little clump of trees which we have mentioned. Suddenly an anxious, pained look came into Mrs. Poythress's face. Mr. Poythress put his hand to his ear and listened. An angry flush overspread his countenance.

"*'Stop!'* cried he to the coachman.

"There could be no doubt about it: it was Theodoric's flute, and—shades of John Knox!—playing a jig.

"Mr. Poythress opened the door with a quick push and stepped out. *'Go on to the house,'* said he to the driver.

"A moment later, the carriage turned a corner of the little wood, and Mrs. Poythress saw her boy, seated upon a log, playing away, while in front of him a negro lad, of about his age, was dancing for dear life. A gang of happy urchins stood around them with open mouths. Mr. Poythress was striding down upon the party unperceived.

"The off horse, annoyed by the dust, gave a snort.

"One glance was enough for the audience; and panic-stricken, they were off in an instant, like a covey of partridges.

"The musician and the dancer had not heard the horse, and followed, for an instant, with puzzled looks, the backs of the fugitive sinners.

"When Theodoric saw his father bearing rapidly down upon him, he rose from his rustic seat and stood, with downcast look and pale face, awaiting his approach. The dancer turned to run.

"*"Stop, sir!"*

"The father stood towering above the son, shaking from head to foot.

"*"Give me that flute, sir!"* And seizing it, he broke it into a dozen pieces against the log.

"The boy stood perfectly still, with his arms hanging by his side and his head bowed.

"*"You are silent! I am glad that you have some sense of shame, at any rate! To think that a son of mine should do such a thing! When I am done with you, you will know better for the future, I promise you."* And cutting a branch from a neighboring tree, he began to trim it. *"And not content with desecrating the day yourself, you must needs teach my servants to do so. How often have I not told you that we were responsible for their souls?"*

"*"Lor', mahrster,'* chattered the terrified dancer, *'Marse The., he didn't ax me to dance, 'fo' Gaud he didn't. I was jess a-passin' by, an' I hear de music, and somehownuther de debbil he jump into my heel. 'Twan't Marse The., 'twas me; leastwise de old debbil he wouldn't lemme hold my foot on de groun', and so I jess sort o' give one or two backsteps, an' cut two or*

three little pigeon-wings, jess as I was a-passin' by like.'

" 'Very well, I shan't pass *you* by.'

" 'Yes, mahrster, but I didn't fling down de steps keen, like 'twas Sad'day night, 'deed I didn't, mahrster; and I was jess a-sayin' as how Marse The. didn't ax me; de ole debbil, he—'

" 'Shut up, sir!'

" 'Yes, mahrster!'

"Theodoric gave a quick, grateful glance at his brother sinner.

"Although he was without coat or vest,—for the day was warm,—he did not wince when the blows fell heavy and fast upon his shoulders. At last his father desisted, and turned to the negro lad.

"Mr. Poythress had never, in the memory of this boy, punished one of his servants; but seeing that this precedent was in a fair way of being reversed in his case, he began to plead for mercy with all the volubility of untutored eloquence. Meantime, he found extreme difficulty in removing his coat; for his heart was not in the work; and before he got off the second sleeve he had pledged himself nebber to do so no mo' in a dozen keys.

"Theodoric stepped between his father and the culprit.

" 'I take all the blame on myself. If there is to be any more flogging, give it to me.'

"His father pushed him violently aside, and aimed a stroke at the young negro; but Theodoric sprang in front of him and received the descending rod upon his shoulders.

"Was this magnanimity? or was it not rebellion, rather?

" 'Do you presume to dictate to me?'

" 'I do not. I simply protest against an injustice.'

"These were not the words of a boy, nor was the look a boy's look; but his father, blinded by the *odium theologicum*, could not see that a man's spirit shone in those dark, kindling eyes.

" 'How dare you!' said the father, seizing him by the arm.

"The boy held his ground.

"This resistance maddened Mr. Poythress, and the rod came down with a sounding whack. It was one blow too many!

"Instantly the boy tossed back his head, and folding his arms, met his father's angry look with one of calm ferocity.

"The look of an Indian at the stake, defying his enemies!

"The blows came thick and heavy. Not a muscle moved; while the lad who stood behind him writhed with an agony that was half fear, half sympathy. At last he could endure it no longer. Coming forward, he laid his hand, timidly, on his master's arm.

"'He nuvver ax me to dance, mahrster, 'deed he nuvver! For de love o' Gaud let Marse The. 'lone, an' gimme my shear! My back tougher'n his'n, heap tougher!'

"His master pushed him aside, but the lad came forward again, this time grasping the terrible right arm.

"'Have mussy, mahrster, have mussy! Stop jess one minute and look at Marse The. back,—he shirt soakin' wid blood!'

"At these words Mr. Poythress came to himself. 'Take your coat and vest and follow me to the house, sir,' said he.

"They found Mrs. Poythress pacing nervously up and down the front porch.

"'He will not play any more jigs on Sunday, that I promise you. Go to your room, sir, and do not leave it again to-day.'

"The mother, divining what had happened, said nothing; but her eyes filled with tears. The boy turned his face aside, and his lips twitched as he passed her, on his way into the house. Just as he entered the door, she gave a cry of horror and sprang forward; and though the boy struggled hard to free himself, she dragged him back upon the porch.

"'What is this, Mr. Poythress? What do you mean, sir?' she almost shrieked.

"Every family must have a head; and Mr. Poy-

thress was the head of his. Few women could have stood up long against his firm will and his clear-cut, vigorous convictions. At any rate, acquiescence in whatever he thought and did had become a second nature with his gentle wife; who had come to look upon him as a model of wisdom, virtue, and piety. She had even reached the point, by degrees, of heartily accepting his various isms; and though she sometimes winced under the austere puritanism that marked the restrictions he imposed upon their boy, she never doubted that it was all for the best. Very well, she would end by saying, I suppose you are right. There were no disputes,—hardly any discussions under the Oakhurst roof.

“Imagine, therefore, the scene, when this soft-eyed woman, dragging her son up to his father, pointed to his bloody back with quivering finger and a face on fire with eloquent indignation!

“‘Were you mad? What fiend possessed you? And *such* a son! Merciful Father,’ she cried, with clasped hands, ‘what have I done, that I should see such a sight as this! Come,’ said she; and taking her son’s arm, she hurried him to his room, leaving Mr. Poythress speechless and stunned; as well by shame as by the suddenness of her passionate invective.

“There she cut the shirt from his back, and after washing away the blood, helped him to dress. ‘Now lie down,’ said she.

“He did as he was bidden; obeying her, mechanically, in all things. But he spoke not a single word.

“She left the room and came back, an hour afterwards. His position was not changed in the least. Even his eyes were still staring straight in front of him, just as when she left the room. She said, afterwards, that there was no anger in his look, but dead despair only. When she asked if he would come down to dinner, there was a change. He gave her one searching glance of amazement, then fixed his eyes on the wall again. At supper-time he came down-stairs, but passed by the dining-room door without stopping. His mother called to him, but he did not seem to hear.

He returned in half an hour, and went to his room. He had gone, as she afterwards learned, to the cabin of the negro lad, and called him out. 'You stood by me to-day,' said he. 'I have come to thank you. I shan't forget it, that's all.' And he wrung his hand and returned to the house.

"At eleven his mother found him lying on his bed, dressed. 'Get up, my darling, and undress yourself and go to bed.'

"He rose, and she threw her arms around him.

"Presently, releasing himself, gently, from her embrace, he placed his hands upon her shoulders, and holding her at arm's length, gave her one long look of unapproachable tenderness; then suddenly clasping her in his arms, and covering her face with devouring kisses, he released her.

"'Good-night, my precious boy!'

"He made no reply; and she had hardly begun to descend the stairs before she heard the key turn in the lock.

"The poor mother could not sleep. At three o'clock she had not closed her eyes. She rose and stole upstairs. His door stood open. She ran, breathless, into the room.

"A flood of moonlight lay upon his bed. The bed was empty. Her boy was gone!

"To this day she has never been able to learn his fate."

"How terrible!"

"And now you see why I was so agitated at the christening of our boy, and why I looked so grim, as you said. I was determined, at all hazards, to name him Theodoric. But I did not know how Mr. Poythress would take it. I was delighted when I saw that his heart was touched by my tribute to his son."

"Yesterday and to-day you have been tried severely. Go to bed and get some sleep."

"I will."

"Would you mind letting me read, now, the Don's letter?"

Charley bent his head in thought for a while. "Yes,"

said he, drawing the letter from his pocket, "you may read it." And handing it to her, he left the room.

With trembling fingers she opened it, and read as follows:

"TAYLOR'S SPRINGS, Tuesday.

"MY BELOVED CHARLEY:

"It wrings my heart to have to tell you, but I fear it is all over with me. For several days I have been growing consciously weaker, and just now I overheard the surgeon say to my nurse that I could not live a week. Come to me, if you can with prudence. It would not be so lonely, dying, with my hand clasped in yours. And oh! if *she* could come too; but without knowing to whom; I insist on that. Tell her (I leave the time to you)—tell her, that when she follows after, she will find me sitting without the Golden Gate, waiting—waiting to ask forgiveness, and bid her farewell, there—or—it may be—to enter therein, hand in hand with her—perhaps—for I have loved much.

"Come to me, friend of friends—if you can—but if not—farewell, farewell—and may God bless you and your Alice!

"DORY."

When Charley returned, his wife sprang to meet him.

"And 'Dory' means—?"

"Yes," said Charley.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THEY talked far into the night. What he told her of scenes already described in this book it is needless to repeat. But he gave her some other details which may interest the reader.

"I felt strongly drawn toward him while I nursed him in this very house, four years ago. There was nothing supernatural about that. I suppose I liked him because I liked him, just as I had done as a boy. No,

I had not the least suspicion who he was at first; and when, finally, I had read his secret, I had no intention of letting him know that he was discovered; but I was betrayed into doing so on the occasion of the death of old Ponto. We talked all that night, and he gave me a sketch of his history."

That sketch, supplemented by additional details that he had afterwards, from time to time, given Charley, would fill a volume. For our purposes, it is only necessary to say that his life, for some time after he left his home, was one of many hardships and vicissitudes. These came to a sudden end.

He had found his way to New York, and was picking up precarious pennies by playing the flute in beer-saloons, when he had the good fortune to touch the heart of an old man by the pathos of his "Home, Sweet Home." This old man was, as it turned out, of humble birth, and had amassed and retired on a snug little fortune. He was a Bostonian, yet deficient in culture, as was clear; for, though abundantly able to pay for champagne, he was drinking beer. He had lost an only son years before, who, had he lived, would have been of about Theodoric's age; and when he saw a tear glisten in the boy's eye as he played (it was his own kind, sympathetic look that had evoked it,—besides, the boy had not tasted food that day), he stealthily slipped two half-dollars into his hand. The boy looked at the money, looked at the man; then plunged through the door of the saloon into the street. The look was the only thanks the old man got, but he felt that that was enough. He followed him and found him standing in the shadow of a booth; and when he laid his hand upon his shoulder, the boy began to sob.

Hunger is king. The pampered pug sniffs, without emotion, boned turkey on a silver dish; a gaunt street-cur whines over a proffered crust.

That very night his new friend rigged him out in a new suit, and telegraphed his wife that he had found a boy for her. They reached Boston next day. That night a family consultation was held between the old couple; and next morning, after breakfast, they an-

nounced to Theodoric that they were to set out, in two days, for Europe, where they expected to travel for several years. They were in comfortable circumstances, they told him, but very lonely since the loss of their son. Would he go with them? If he did not like them, they would send him back to America; if he did, they would adopt him as their son. Theodoric, though his pride revolted, was so eager to put the ocean between himself and his former home, that he accepted their offer.

Gratitude being a strong trait in his character, he soon grew deeply attached to his benefactors, notwithstanding their lack of exterior polish. They idolized him. They were both, especially his adopted mother, particularly proud of his strikingly aristocratic air. Accordingly, they lavished money upon him, and constantly scolded him because he could not be induced to spend it. They were made happy, one day, by his requesting permission to employ a violin master. It was the first favor, involving money, that he had ever asked.

He had declined, from the first, to reveal his name. Nor did they press him, feeling that if that were known, it might lead to their losing him. So he took theirs,—a name with which all English-speaking people are familiar; christening himself John, to the deep chagrin of Mrs. S., who had set her heart on Reginald de Courcy.

And philosophers, who saw the trio, explained that it no longer, in these days of steam and telegraphs and wide travel, took three generations to make a gentleman.

The tour in Europe resulted in permanent residence across the water. At the end of three years, the party had returned to Boston, but the old people found that such acquaintances as they had there were no longer to their taste. At any rate, their society was not good enough, to their thinking, for John, who, they were glad to believe, was sprung from Virginia's bluest blood. So they shook the dust of America from their feet.

In 1858 his kind adopted mother died in Paris,—his father a year later, in London; and Theodoric found

himself residuary legatee in the sum of nearly one hundred and fifty thousand dollars (twenty-seven thousand pounds).

In the midst of all this prosperity, Theodoric had not been happy. At times the thought of his own sorrowing mother greatly troubled him. And when he found himself again alone in the world, this feeling came over him with redoubled force. Remorse, at last, growing stronger and stronger, gave him no rest; travel brought him no alleviation; and finally, his longing for home becoming irresistible, he took passage for America, and found himself, two weeks later, strolling through the streets of Richmond, with no very definite plans as to how he should make himself known to his family. It was on the very day of his arrival that he encountered little Laura, and discovered that she was his sister.

"What prevented him from revealing himself while he was in Leicester," said Charley, "was the approach of the war. He would wait till peace came. His mother had already lost him once, he said. Once he was on the very verge of betraying himself. It was when you so deeply agitated him by unconsciously opening his eyes to the fact that, though he knew that Lucy was his sister, she did not. Don't you remember?"

"Remember!"

* * * * * * * *
* * * * * * * *

"And so you are going to escort Mrs. Poythress to Harrisonburg and Taylor's Springs to-morrow morning? You are not strong enough for such a journey; but now that I know all, I too, say go. Are you going to tell his mother who he is?"

"No; he has expressly forbidden that. I am to choose my time, hereafter."

"I think it would be cruel ever to tell her. To lose such a son twice! No, let the secret remain with you and me forever."

"It will be unavoidable."

Alice looked up.

"You see, he has made a will, of which I have possession; and as, after certain legacies are deducted, the residue of his estate goes to his father and his mother, in equal shares—"

"His father?"

"Yes. I found no difficulty in convincing him that his resentment against his father was unjust, seeing that he had punished him from a sense of duty. The influence that I have over him has always surprised me."

"Why could you not make him forgive Mary?"

"I didn't try. A man has but one father; but as for sweethearts, there are as good fish in the sea as—"

"What!"

"Well, except *one*."

"Ah!"

"Besides, Mary opened an old wound. Bigotry, as he deemed it, had wrecked his life once, already. I suspect that he is very bitter against her."

"How sad that he should be so implacable in his wrath!"

"He is equally as 'implacable' in his gratitude. Would you believe it? He directs that the freedom of the lad who 'stood by him' be bought, and a hundred dollars counted into his hand besides. By the way, I forgot to mention that this lad is none other than my man Sam, who passed into the possession of our family, by exchange, years ago. He, you remember, when you and I were sitting in the Argo—a-May-ing—"

CHAPTER LXXIX.

ON the piazza of a house in Harrisonburg sat two young surgeons. One of them was on duty there; the other had driven in from Taylor's Springs to procure supplies, and his ambulance-wagon stood in front of the door.

"Well," said the visitor, rising, "I must hurry back."

"Any serious cases?"

"Yes; one more than serious. Captain Smith—gallant fellow—pity!"

"Ah, indeed. Poor fellow,—I feared so. He stopped here for an hour or so, then persisted, against my remonstrances, in going out to Taylor's. Well, good-by. Drop in whenever you are in town."

"Thank you, I will. Good-day."

"Doctor! doctor!"

The voice was quick and nervous, and the young surgeon hurried to the open window. "What can I do for you, Miss Rolfe?"

"Ask your friend to wait one moment," said she, as she hastily tied her bonnet-strings; "I want to go to Taylor's." And running to a little closet, she drew forth a shawl.

The doctor had hardly had time to deliver the message before Mary was on the piazza. "Can you give me a seat in your wagon?"

"Certainly," said the surgeon, lifting his cap.

He was proud to have so pretty a woman grace his equipage, and he looked forward to a pleasant chat along the road; but he soon discovered that, though she made an effort to appear interested, she did not hear what he said. And so he gave over his effort to entertain her, and they drove forward in a silence that was hardly broken till the driver turned out of the Port Republic Road.

"Are we almost there?"

"It is less than a mile from here. We shall be there in a few minutes."

She gave a slight shiver.

"Have you any friends there, among the wounded?"

"Yes—no—that is, he is not exactly a friend of mine. He is a friend of some very dear friends of mine, who would like to know how he is."

"Oh, I see. I am surgeon in charge; may I ask the name?"

"Captain Smith."

"Captain Smith?"

"Yes, of the Stonewall skirmishers."

"Oh, yes. I was speaking of him, to-day, in Harrisonburg."

"Is his wound dangerous?"

"He was shot through the right lung."

"Are such wounds very dangerous? I mean, are they necessarily fatal?"

"No, not always."

Then there was silence for a hundred yards. Suddenly she asked, in a low voice, "Do you think there is any hope?"

The surgeon was silent for a little while. "I cannot give you much encouragement," he said, at last.

She did not speak again till the wagon stopped in front of the farm-house, which at that time constituted, with the usual out-buildings, Taylor's Springs. It has since been added to, and the name changed to Massanetta. Then, as now, the waters of the beautiful, bubbling spring below the house, at the foot of the hill, enjoyed a high repute as a potent specific in cases of malarial trouble; and a military sanitarium had been established there, the tents of which dotted the little valley.

"The house, as you see," said the surgeon, as they descended the slope from the road to the front door, "is too small for a hospital; so the men are under canvas. Your friend, however,—I mean your friends' friend,—is in the house. It is right to warn you that you will find him much changed. Or did I understand you to say that you had never met him?"

"I knew him once,—years ago."

"Walk in," said he, opening the door; but she had already dropped into a chair that stood upon the porch. "Ah, you are tired," said he. "Let me bring you a glass of water. No? Is there anything that I can do for you?"

She shook her head, lifting her eyes, for a moment, to his. That moment was enough,—he read them; "I will leave you here for a little while,—till you get rested."

She bowed her head in silent acquiescence.

Three or four convalescent soldiers who sat on the

porch looked at her pale face, and then at each other; and they stole away, one by one, making as little noise as they could with their heavy brogans.

If a man be a man, he is not far from being a gentleman.

And Mary was alone with her anguish.

Two or three times the surgeon stole to the door, glanced at the bowed, motionless figure, and as often retired within the house. At last she beckoned him to her side.

"I am rested now," she said. "How is he?"

"About the same."

"Can I see him?"

"Yes; walk in. One moment." And stepping to the second door on the right-hand side of the hall, he opened it and beckoned. A soldier came out into the hall.

"Shelton," said he, "you can stroll around for a while; when I want you I will call you. This way." And he bowed Mary into the room and closed the door softly behind her.

"Poor girl! poor girl!" said he, shaking his head; and he left the hall.

CHAPTER LXXX.

For a moment Mary stood with downcast eyes; then, looking up, gave a start.

"Oh—I beg your pardon! I was told I should find Captain Smith in this room," said she, making for the door.

Just then the evening sun, which was slowly sinking in the west, burst from behind a cloud, and poured a stream of light in the room. She looked again. A clean-shaven face of chiselled marble, as clear-cut and as pale. Could it be he?

"I am Captain Smith—or was—"

"I did not know you without your beard."

"The doctor had it taken off to get at the wound in my cheek."

"I can hardly believe you are the same person. But for your eyes, I— *They* tell me you are the same. I had hoped—"

Mary sank into a chair.

"I beg your pardon. In my surprise, I forgot the courtesy due a lady."

"I am not come as a lady, but as a woman. Turn away your eyes if you will; but hear me. Why do you hate me so? What have I done? You loved me once. At least you told me so; and as for myself—but I shall not trouble you with that. We plighted our faith. I broke my word, I acknowledge that. But do you deny the claims of conscience? Not if you are the man you have always seemed. Did it cost me nothing? It broke my heart, and—you-ou—know-ow-ow—it. You need not sneer! Alice knows it, and my mother, too, if you do not know—or care. Look at me, and remember the fresh-hearted young girl you knew four years ago—and told her—you would—love her—al-al-al-always!"

Mary covered her face with her hands, and the tears streamed down her cheeks, but with a supreme effort she suppressed her sobs.

The captain of the Myrmidons was silent.

At last, Mary, drying her eyes, arose, tottering, from her seat.

"And so I have come in vain! Once before I humbled myself in the dust before you—and you spurned me—"

The captain shook his head wearily.

"Yes, spurned me, and in the presence of others; so that even that poor dying man found it in his heart to pity me. And you, too, are dying, yet have not the mercy of a stranger and an enemy. You bade me read Homer, and taught me to admire Achilles, yet even his flinty heart was melted by the tears of Priam."

The adamant lips trembled.

"I have read the passage again and again, and wondered how you, as brave in battle, could be so much

more pitiless than he. And Priam was a man, I a woman; Priam was his enemy, while I—"

A slight tremor shook his frame.

"At least, I am not that!"

She bowed her head for a moment; then, lifting her clasped hands and impassioned and despairing eyes to heaven:

"Merciful Father, have I not suffered enough! Must it be that from this time forth I shall know no peace,—haunted forever by the cold glitter of those implacable eyes, that were once—"

"Mary!"

She started. Had she heard aright?

"Mary, my beloved!"

She gave two cries; for she had heard—and she saw—one of exultant joy, the other of frenzied despair.

Found—and lost!

Falling upon her knees by the bedside, she buried her face in her hands.

He laid his hand upon her head.

Then the great sobs, long pent up, burst forth,—

"Mary!"

His words were too precious to be lost, and she mastered herself to listen.

"Mary, I have been a monster!"

She seized his hand.

"Can you ever forgive me?"

She covered it with tearful kisses.

"I don't deserve this; but oh, how I have loved you all these years!"

"Oh, don't tell me that, don't tell me that!" And a moan burst forth from her very heart.

"I am too weak to talk. Charley will tell you why I was so bitter. He knows all. Ask him."

She drew up a chair, and, sitting beside him, tried to smile, as she stroked back the chestnut hair from his forehead.

"Wonderful!" said she.

He looked up.

"I wish Lucy could see you without your beard, you

are so much like her. And Edmund, too. Wonderful!" repeated she, drawing back for a better look. "And Mr. Poythress, too! Father and son were never more alike. Look!" And she handed him a little broken mirror that hung upon the wall.

She looked at him to see what he thought. And a thrill of terror shot through her heart. She had nursed men before who had been shot through the lungs. She pressed her handkerchief to his lips.

It was soaked with blood.

The door opened softly. "A lady and a gentleman from Richmond," said the surgeon. "Will you see them now? Yes?"

Charley entered first. As soon as she saw him Mary threw herself upon his breast, and hung upon his neck with convulsive, half-suppressed sobs, then greeted Mrs. Poythress in the same way. Then she ran back to Charley. "He has forgiven me!"

"No, Charley; she has forgiven me. And you came! I knew you would. And she, too!"

Mrs. Poythress, sitting on the edge of the bed, held one of his hands, Charley the other. Mary sat stroking back the chestnut hair. The room was dark; for a little cloud floated across the face of the sun, whose lower edge was just kissing the rim of the hill that rises between Massanetta and the west.

"How is the baby?" asked he, with a faint smile, and gently pressing Charley's hand. "What did—Alice—name him?"

"Alice left that to me. He was christened—Theodoric."

"True as steel! I die happy! Charley—my Mary has—forgiven me my selfish anger. If there is any other person—that I have wronged—tell her—my last breath—"

The cloud passed on, and the last soft rays of that setting October sun flashed upon his pallid face.

Mrs. Poythress sprang to her feet. Bending over him with clasped hands, she poured upon him one long look of passionate interrogation.

He tried to speak. His eyes glanced from face to

face, as though beseeching help. Mrs. Poythress turned to Charley. He stood with his eyes fixed upon the floor. She sprang in front of him, and placing a hand upon either shoulder, and drawing him close to her, with wide-staring, eager eyes, that would wring an answer from him, looked into his:

"Charley?"

"Yes," said he.

She turned to the bed.

He had heard; and an ineffable tenderness had come into his face, softening, sweeping away, with the rush of unspeakable love, the hard lines that years of suffering had wrought. 'Twas a boy's face once more—'twas Edmund's—'twas—?

She stood before him with outstretched arms, eager with certainty,—held motionless by a slender thread of doubt.

He tried to speak. And again—

At last, with one supreme effort, and borne upon his last breath, a murmured word broke the stillness of the room. One little word,—but that the sweetest, tenderest, that tongue of man can utter,—

"Mother!"

"My Dory!" and she fell upon his neck. And the snowy hair and the chestnut, intermingled, lay, motionless, on one pillow!

And which of the two shall we pity?

He seemed to hear that name. At any rate, a beaming look—a serenely exultant smile—

I remember hurrying, once, to the roar of a battle which was over before our command reached the field. The combatants were gone. The wounded, even, had been removed. Only the Silent lay there, upon their gory bed. Wandering a little way from the road, while our troops halted, I saw a fair young boy (he was not over sixteen years of age) seated upon the ground, and leaning back against a young white oak, with his rifle across his lap. Struck with his rare beauty, I drew nearer.

The boy sat still.

I spoke to him.

He did not move.

I stooped and touched his damask cheek.

'Twas cold!

Kneeling in front of him, I saw a bullet-hole in his coat, just over his heart!

But, even then I could hardly believe. His head, thrown back, rested naturally against the tree. His parted lips showed two rows of pearly teeth. His uplifted eyes, which seemed to have drawn their azure from that sky upon which they were so intently fixed, wide open, were lit with a seraphic smile—

As though, peering, with his last look, into that blue abyss, he saw beckoning angels there!

Such a smile illumined poor Dory's face. The heroic spirit had fled. The tumultuous, high-beating heart was still!

And who among us all—who, at least, from whom the sweet bloom—the rosy hopes of youth are gone—who among us, knowing what life really is, would dare awaken its fierce throbbings again?

And the seraphic smile lingered, lit up by the farewell rays of that October sun.

And the sun went down behind Massanetta's hill!

THE END.

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